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# THE MUSICAL QUARTERLY

## JOHANNES BRAHMS

HIS ACHIEVEMENT, HIS PERSONALITY, AND HIS POSITION

By GUIDO ADLER

ON this occasion—the one-hundredth birthday of Brahms—I have set myself the task of defining his personality as man and artist, of summing up his achievement and his position in musical and cultural history.

Has an attempt to do this today a chance of success?

Brahms has been dead for thirty-five years. An imposing mass of literature has accumulated;<sup>1</sup> without ignoring it, I have kept myself absolutely free from its contaminating over- and under-estimates, its positive and negative exaggerations. My personal acquaintance with Brahms, about which I have never written a word, can neither diminish my respect for him nor encroach upon my strictly historical purpose; my personal predilection for Wagner—in the early seventies I joined Felix Mottl in founding the Vienna Wagner-Verein<sup>2</sup>—could not deter me from gradually coming to terms with Brahms's music, the less so since the struggle to

<sup>1</sup>The bulk of the biographical material was first collected by Max Kalbeck, who discussed it as poet and *litterateur*, not as music-historian. Much source material is contained in the publications of the Brahms Society. Then there are valuable monographs, reminiscences such as those of Albert Dietrich, Gustav Jenner, and J. V. Widmann. Other noteworthy researches and studies have appeared in miscellanies and periodicals. Gustav Ophüls's anthology of the poems Brahms set to music—a lyrical breviary—occupies a unique place. The thematic-chronological catalogue of Brahms's works requires revision.

<sup>2</sup>The third founder was not, as everywhere alleged, Hugo Wolf, a boy of eleven at the time, but Karl Wolf, a physician and former choir-boy at the Imperial Chapel.

establish it was going on about me. As my perception of historical values grew more acute, my highest ambition came to be what it is today: to arrive at a scientific comprehension of the periods of musical history, in their continuity and diversity, through the critical analysis of musical style. I have always sought to free myself of *a priori* judgments. In the opinion of qualified judges I did so in 1904 when, after thirty years of inward conflict, I wrote my book on Wagner. The time for a strictly objective appraisal of Brahms's personality and position has come. We await a really definitive book on Brahms. What is offered here is only an essay—in the literal sense, anticipated above—an "attempt."

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Before passing on to Brahms's personality, I propose to avail myself first of statistics, one of the aids to historical demonstration enumerated in my *Method of Musical History*, as a means to a comprehensive view of a composer's accomplishment, of his productivity, and of the distribution of his work among the several branches of musical art, and to their presentation as an ordered whole. For in Brahms's case we can actually trace an orderly course such as great, genuine masters alone enter upon, consciously or unconsciously, in response to inward impulse, from "innermost necessity."

Brahms was already twenty when his Opus 1 appeared. It was not his first work, of course. His self-discipline in destroying almost all of his earlier writing as immature compels admiration. When Beethoven came forward with his Opus 1 he was already twenty-five. His father, vain and importunate, had previously courted notoriety and profit by publishing some of his son's early work. Brahms's father was not a drunkard, like Beethoven's, but a responsible orchestra-member; his bass-playing did credit to his musicianship if it did not increase his credit at the bank. Not all composers are prodigies. The world would have lost much had the early works of Handel, Mozart, Schumann, and Mendelssohn been withheld. Yet Beethoven's cantata on the death of the Emperor Joseph II (1791) is conclusive evidence of the great talent of the twenty-year-old composer and reflects unmistakably its author's individuality, indomitable, ceaselessly evolving. Brahms's Opus 1 and 2, his Opus 3 and 6, reflect as unmistakably the spiritual physiognomy of their author, struggling incessantly toward more and more individual expression. These works



comprise two piano sonatas and two sets of songs, six songs in each set; they were succeeded, in the following year, by eight new songs (Op. 7), and a scherzo (Op. 4) and third sonata (Op. 5) for the piano. Brahms abandoned the piano sonata at this point, preferring instead to continue the variation-writing to which he devoted himself the more assiduously after 1854 (Op. 9), deliberately accommodating himself to his own peculiar capacity and carrying out in this way his own peculiar artistic destiny. The slow movements of his first and second sonatas are variations, preliminary studies, as it were, for Opus 9, that significant work of consecration and tribute, the variations on a theme by Schumann. The most direct manifestation of his artistic personality lies, however, in his early songs, and I have no hesitation in saying that the song "Liebestreu" ("Faithful Love"), which stands at the head of his first published set, reveals in miniature the very essence of that personality in all its intimacy and reserve.

I am tempted to insert here a brief analysis of the song in support of this view of mine which others, to be sure, share with me, although it can only be justified and demonstrated fully in the course of the discussion that follows.

Words and music, stanzas and lines, combine in Brahms's setting to form a single entity. The three stanzas of the poem correspond to the three-part form of the music. Each stanza divides into two couplets in which four- and three-foot lines alternate, the first couplet given over to the mother's words, the second to the daughter's. As in a folk-song, the dialogue is poetically and musically an indivisible unit. The mother as warning counsellor, the daughter as personification of unswerving fidelity—maternal anxiety and affection on the one hand, maidenly longing and surrender on the other—these antitheses blend in a composite picture that is purely lyric. Some commentators call it "dramatic" as well, misusing the word in this connection, as though it were a question of an external manifestation of an internal conflict.

Through form, then, but also through the means employed, the poetic-musical picture is unified, the poet-painter Robert Reineck (1805-1852) and the composer are merged in a single personality. How is this brought about?

On the vocal side, the daughter's melody may appear to be independent of the mother's, but they are none the less related. And although the daughter elects the medium register (*e-flat'* to *a-flat''*), the mother a somewhat lower one (*f'* to *g-flat''*), the two halves of the dialogue almost coincide, even in compass. On the instrumental side, a basic accompaniment-figure—repeated chords in groups of three—is maintained from beginning to end, throbbing sympathetically, now in the middle register, now slightly higher as the daughter replies, a tonal reflex of inner unrest. The most significant detail, however, is the thematic design in the singer's part and in the lowest voice of the accompaniment, a design developed from a single element that makes its first appearance in the bass at the very beginning of the song (a). The mother takes it over at once (b) and

retains it until it asserts itself, at length, in the daughter's last reply (c), proclaiming, not defeat, but unalterable determination.

a etc. b etc.

O ver - senk', o ver - senk' dein Leid, mein Kind  
Oh sink, oh sink thy grief, my child

c

O Mut - ter, und split - tert der Fels auch im Wind, mei - ne Treu - e, die hält ihn aus  
Oh moth - er, tho' shat - tered be rocks by the winds, my truth, it is strong as they

At G-flat, the third note in the bass, the voice enters with *f'*, a dissonance that is repeated. In the accompaniment the transformations of the motive mount higher and higher until it is itself shattered as the daughter's resolution takes definite shape.

*sva bassa*

And in keeping with the passionate desire that accompanies the daughter's determination, her last words are repeated in the coda that rounds out the form; plaintive phrases, half sighs, descend step by step (*sempre rit. e dim. sin al fine*) while, below the persistently throbbing chords of the accompaniment, the bass repeats the *Urmotiv*, unobtrusively and, as the general agogic design demands, more and more deliberately, bringing the song to an end in *pianissimo*.

*sva bassa*

Aside from transient modifications, the basic tempo (*Sehr langsam*) is maintained throughout. The mother's first speech is marked *piano*, the daughter's *pianissimo* and *träumerisch* (dreamily); the mother's second speech *poco più mosso*, the daughter's *Tempo I*, *pianissimo*; the third stanza *agitato*, *più forte*. That the coda returns by degrees to the basic tempo has already been indicated. Harmonically, the song is fundamentally diatonic—dissonances like those referred to above being a part of Brahms's personal idiom, the artistic expression of a particular side of his character;<sup>3</sup> melodically, the song is altogether vocal. In thirty-eight measures the whole picture has been disclosed, a genuinely Brahmsian bit of tone-painting. It owes its organic continuity to the example of Schumann and Schubert, but the working-out of the motives, the quasi-contrapuntal independence of the accompanying bass, and the E-flat minor tonality<sup>4</sup> point to Brahms and to a new stage in the development of romantic song.

<sup>3</sup>See below, p. 120.

<sup>4</sup>Used again in "Weit über das Feld" (High Over the Fields), the fourth song in this same set, and in the scherzo for piano (Op. 4), written a year later.

While this song reveals Brahms's fully developed artistic physiognomy, the remainder of his early song-writing is less individual, and in the other departments of his work his growing independence is only beginning to assert itself. I would not anticipate or try to trace in this early song the ground plan for the musical palace that he reared in later life. Not until I have discussed the *man* and completed my survey of his accomplishment can I characterize the *artist*. And I am fully aware that, while artistic personality can be described and circumscribed, certain residues, certain imponderabilities remain inevitably, no more explicable in words than the "Why?" that disquiets the natural scientist. With this reservation I return to my subject.

Statistics show a uniform distribution of Brahms's work for instruments and for voices from Opus 1 (1853) to Opus 121 (1896).<sup>5</sup> His songs form an unbroken series, the number published each year being as follows:

1861..... 6	1874..... 9
1862..... 5	1877..... 23
1864..... 9	1882..... 17
1868..... 40	1884..... 14
1869..... 18	1886..... 10
1871..... 16	1889..... 15
1873..... 8	

In 1896, after a pause, came the four "Ernste Gesänge." Brahms was then enjoying the good health that had favored him all his life; "I have written them for my birthday," he said. There are also about seventy folk-songs, some of them for children, composed between 1858 and 1894. In addition to these songs for a solo voice with accompaniment (almost invariably the piano), duets were published in 1861, 1864, 1874, 1875, and 1878—twenty in all; quartets for solo voices in 1864, 1874, 1875, 1884, 1888, and 1891—forty-one in all; and women's choruses in 1861, 1862, 1864, 1866, 1885, and 1891—thirty-five in all, among them the "Ave Maria" and the "Thirteenth Psalm." Men's choruses he avoided, doubtless because of the "Liedertafel" tendency then current in men's singing societies, though he wrote five male choruses in 1867 and gave men's voices special prominence in his *Rinaldo* (1869), for tenor solo, men's chorus, and orchestra, and in his *Rhapsody* (1870) for alto solo, men's chorus, and orchestra, compositions to texts that demand a particular choral combination. They bring me to the subject of what I might call his cantata composition;

<sup>5</sup>A few minor works were published without opus number. Opus 122, eleven chorale preludes for the organ, appeared posthumously in 1902.

before touching upon it I shall enumerate briefly his larger choral works, to secular and sacred texts:

1861....1 "Begräbnisgesang" with wind-instruments

1862....7 *Marienlieder*

1864....2 five-part motets (a cappella)

1 four-part sacred song with orchestra

1868....3 six-part choruses (a cappella)

1874....7 part-songs (a cappella)

1879....2 motets (a cappella)

1884....6 four-part songs and romances (a cappella)

1889....5 part-songs (a cappella)

1890....3 eight-part "Fest- und Gedenksprüche"

3 four- and eight-part motets (a cappella)

Fourteen German folk-songs for four-part chorus were published without opus number in 1864.

Brahms's major choral works with orchestra are the *Schicksalslied* (1871), the *Triumphlied* (with solo, 1872), *Nänie* (1881), and the *Gesang der Parzen* (1883). But as early as 1868 he had already attained his full stature as a composer of cyclic choral music with the *German Requiem*. The date is worth noting; as a composer of cyclic orchestral music he did not reach maturity until 1877.

The two serenades for orchestra (1860 and 1875) and the orchestral variations (1874) are in themselves extremely valuable, in the last instance well-nigh perfect preliminary studies for the four symphonies (1877, 1878, 1884, and 1886). How long it took him to clear the field for the first of these and to till that field systematically! If, as some critics have not improperly alleged, the score of the first piano concerto (1861), in D minor, is overladen in spots, tonally and contrapuntally, the work evinces a command of the orchestra that is already well-developed. From this same point of view, the second piano concerto (1882), in B-flat, the violin concerto (1879), and the double concerto for violin and violoncello (1888) are worthy companions and successors to the symphonies, his supreme attainment in orchestral writing, distinguished chiefly by the economy of his voice-leading and by the way he handles instrumental color.

It is sometimes said that Brahms's achievement centers about his chamber music, and that to this department his most personal and most enduring utterances belong. Yet the place this part of his work occupies is not large, comparatively speaking, nor does his best chamber music surpass his outstanding accomplishments in other fields. Without pretending to a knowledge of the future

I may say that the *German Requiem*, the symphonies, and certain of the songs and choral compositions hold the foreground in the contemporary cultivation of Brahms's music, the chamber music following in second place. Brahms wrote twenty-four works of this kind in all:

- 3 trios for piano, violin and violoncello . . . . .1854 (revised and completed in 1889) 1883, 1887
- 2 string sextets . . . . .1862, 1866
- 3 piano quartets . . . . .1863 (2), 1875
- 1 piano quintet . . . . .1865
- 2 sonatas for piano and violoncello . . . . .1866, 1887
- 1 trio for piano, violin and horn (or violoncello or viola) . . . . .1868
- 3 string quartets . . . . .1873 (2), 1875
- 3 sonatas for piano and violin . . . . .1880, 1887, 1889
- 2 quintets for 2 violins, 2 violas, and violoncello . . . . .1883, 1891
- 1 quintet for clarinet (or viola), 2 violins, and violoncello . . . . .1892
- 1 trio for piano, clarinet (or viola), and violoncello . . . . .1892
- 2 sonatas for piano and clarinet . . . . .1895

The date of his earliest work for each combination is italicized, not only to justify the principle of arrangement I have followed, but also to bring out the underlying plan: beginning with combinations including piano, Brahms turned next to the string sextet and was already in his forties when he published his first works for the most difficult of all chamber combinations, the string quartet.<sup>6</sup> His first quintets for strings came ten years later. Among his last chamber-music compositions are several including the clarinet, an instrument to which he paid special attention, partly from an interest in one of the Meiningen clarinetists,<sup>7</sup> partly from a sentimental weakness for this "romantic" instrument. The statement that Brahms exhibits a general tendency to favor wind-instruments in his chamber-music cannot be reconciled with the facts, as my tabulation shows. With very few exceptions, Brahms followed only his artistic instincts and his estimate of his momentary capabilities, the promptings of his friends and his conception of the course his development ought to take. He aimed to come as near

<sup>6</sup>Brahms is said to have begun twenty quartets that he destroyed later as immature.

<sup>7</sup>Similar considerations prompted Mozart and Weber to write their quintets and concertos for the clarinet.

to ideal artistic purity as his limitations would permit. All this is thoroughly in keeping with his character.

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Brahms's character is not simple and straightforward like the character of the Viennese classicists Haydn and Mozart; more like Beethoven's, which presents all sorts of contradictions. Benevolence (*Grundgüte*) is his basic trait as it is theirs. Yet, unlike these representatives of an optimistic period, Brahms is not optimistic, even when he attains spiritual liberation in the last movements of his first symphony and other cyclic works, following the precedent of Beethoven's "Ninth." He is not pessimistic in the sense in which Schopenhauer uses the word, not egocentric like Wagner, not altruistic like Schumann, Liszt, and Mahler. His personality is complex, yet perfectly consistent. Fine traits of character are blended with harshness, rudeness, even coarseness, self-applause with self-criticism, modesty with self-esteem.

Work was the keynote of his life from his first compulsory servitude in the sailors' bars of Hamburg to his last "Ernste Gesänge." At the same time he realized Beethoven's lifelong ambition and, aside from the few short-lived appointments he held before his forty-second year, steered clear of permanent positions, travelling in winter in order to perform his works, visiting music festivals in summer for the same purpose. Teaching was a burden to him. He shrank from publicity and only once allowed himself to be misled into a "declaration," that against the New-German School.

Never married, Brahms was passionately fond of children, kind to those in distress, anxious to give and reluctant to receive, economical in his expenditures, charitable toward his family and toward needy artists whose talents he valued and whose advancement he sought. He was a fervent lover of nature and a faithful friend. Surly toward strangers, his attitude changed by slow degrees, growing more and more cordial until the tie became permanent. Friction was not infrequent, though it seldom marred the course of friendship; here too tenacity and perseverance asserted themselves. Sometimes, but not often, these disturbances had their humorous side; the same is true of his music, of his "Academic Festival Overture," for example. Given to irony and sarcasm, he avoided shallow wit. In a circle of close friends his good nature got the upper hand, as it does sometimes in his works; at other times the gloomy side of his personality overpowered him, and he saw liberation only in "life after death."



Deeply religious, well versed in the Scriptures, Brahms was a Lutheran and a member of Protestant society, standing above denominations by reason of his dislike for dogmatically restricted sects, tolerant to the point of scepticism, independent, free-thinking. While there is an affinity between his motets and the Protestant organ chorale, he touches, in passing, on Gregorian motives and resorts to psalmody in parts of his *German Requiem*. His *Marienlieder* and his sacred choruses are expressive of his individuality, prefigured like his other sacred works by historic prototypes, with Johann Sebastian Bach, the supreme ruler of his artistic heaven, at their head. Bach and Mozart were his "musical gods"; Beethoven's "gigantic footsteps" he followed deferently and devoutly. "To follow in Beethoven's footsteps transcends one's strength," he said.

It was Brahms's good fortune to win the friendship and, at the same time, the admiration of a select group of men and women.<sup>8</sup> Flattery repelled him; he asked only for sincerity and honesty in thought and word, and offered dedications in return. Robert and Clara Schumann, with their children, head the list; the former had cleared the road to fame for Brahms with the article "New Paths," placing him at the same time under a heavy obligation to fulfill his promise. To mention Joseph and Amalie Joachim, Julius Stockhausen, Hans von Bülow, Max Klinger, Eduard Hanslick, Theodor Billroth, and Philipp Spitta is to name only a few of the friends who received such dedications. The number of art-loving, highly cultured women who interested themselves in his music is not inconsiderable; prominent among these admirers were Elisabeth von Herzogenberg and Henriette Feuerbach, step-mother of the painter Anselm Feuerbach. Most important were the singers, both men and women, who brought his songs to public attention: Amalie Joachim, mentioned once before, whom he consoled during tragic misunderstanding; Hermine Spiess, that splendid alto; Helene Magnus (von Hornbostel); and Alice Barbi. An amateur who sang his songs was Else Billroth, daughter of the physician who brought together a Brahms circle in his home, first in Zurich, then in Vienna. Perhaps it was mere chance that most of Brahms's Vienna friends came from well-to-do Protestant families; those who grouped themselves about Brüll and Goldmark joined them later. While one highly estimable writer has held that Brahms's songs are mainly written for men and that "only

<sup>8</sup>A devoted and intimate acquaintance of his expressed the opinion that Brahms's behavior toward his friends, often inconsiderate and brusque, was, like Beethoven's, the result of careless upbringing.

men are called to sing his *Lieder*," a reference to the list of names I have given above refutes this "extraordinary" claim. Many of his songs are expressly dedicated to women, but aside from this, like all true art, they ask only the whole individual, the mature artist.

Brahms invited frank criticism from his friends and naturally reserved the right to follow or to ignore their opinion and advice; severe self-criticism, subservient only to his artistic ideals, was the court of last resort for him and remained so. He strove resolutely to satisfy the cultural requirements of his day.

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Every artist is subject to his time, the ground from which he rises, and the greatest master too is tied in this way, no matter how independent his development may be. Talented young artists, bent on discovering new territory quickly, sometimes try to tear themselves free. But for all the individuality of his gifts, Brahms was not the impetuous type. He stood on traditional ground, clinging to those things that strengthened and stimulated him artistically.

At the outset of his career, only two of the Viennese classicists—Haydn and Mozart—had achieved general recognition. The works of Beethoven's last period had not yet begun to count, and there were few who sought to promote their cultivation. Brahms was one of these pioneers. Yet he did not regard himself as bound by Beethoven's example to combine poetry and music in cyclic instrumental works; it was Berlioz who attempted this. Brahms kept aloof from Berlioz and his programmatic theories, at some distance, too, from the operatic production of his time, however much the idea of writing an opera himself attracted him. The romantic tendencies of Schubert, Weber, Mendelssohn, Chopin, and Schumann he understood perfectly. Not that he ever became completely converted to romanticism himself; his aim seems rather to have been a synthesis of the classic and romantic, and this ideal accompanied or, more correctly, led him throughout his life. In company with friends he approached the Liszt circle in Weimar, only to retire quickly and firmly. Many an artifice and super-artifice he took over from the virtuosity of Liszt and, more especially, of Paganini, diverting their magic to his uses, broadening Beethoven's piano technic to meet the demands of his music and to permit the free development of his individuality without ever succumbing to virtuosity as an end in itself.



Whatever else Brahms took over he owed to the music of Bach, so successfully revived during his youth—Bach's portrait hung over his bed like a patron saint's—to his study of Handel, and to the accessible vocal works of a few older masters, including compositions of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, the dawn of the Reformation. It was in his day that plans were formulated for the publication of the complete works of the great masters; Brahms was deeply interested and, on occasion, actively involved in this project. Later on, when work began on the publication of the "Denkmäler," Brahms, now the fully mature master, was a keenly attentive member of the editorial boards in Vienna and Berlin. Sometimes he discovered latent practical possibilities in historic works, as in those of Vivaldi; with his fine sense of style he worked out figured bass-parts in music of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Such, in brief, were the artistic influences to which Brahms was exposed, influences that guided, taught, and stimulated him and sped him on his upward path. How, then, did his artistic personality develop, how did character and predisposition assert themselves?

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First of all, Brahms kept faith with himself, never straining for external effect, ending as he began, a German down to the ground. Born and brought up in northern Germany, drawn in 1862 to Vienna, he made the southern capital his permanent residence after 1863—there were temporary interruptions at first—without losing his feeling of attachment for his native city. As late as 1894 he declined an invitation to return to Hamburg as director of the Philharmonic Society. Aside from opera and music drama, no musical composition of the nineteenth century, not even the *Triumphlied*, is more thoroughly national in thought and expression than the *German Requiem*. Indeed, we may see in each of the three great Requiems of the last century—the Brahms, the Berlioz, and the Verdi—a musical embodiment of basic national characteristics.

A synthesis of North and South German elements took place in Brahms's case very much as it had in Beethoven's. Beethoven, when out of sorts, sometimes spoke critically of Vienna, but as the third of the Viennese classicists he belonged to the city and was powerless to leave it. His development, to be sure, coincided with his thirty-six years of residence there; Brahms came to the city of

his choice a fully mature master. Making an exception here, I recall an episode from our association together, a remark Brahms made to me with a grimace worthy of Beethoven: "Vienna is for me a summer residence in winter!" Surprised, I parried by replying: "Presumably because it is in summer that you do most of your writing!" After having changed his summer address repeatedly, trying Baden-Baden, Thun in Switzerland, Rügen, Wörthersee, and Müzzuschlag, Brahms finally settled on Ischl in 1880, almost a Viennese suburb, the Emperor's summer residence. Here he visited with Johann Strauss, whom he admired and respected, and with other Viennese artists and writers. His fondness for Strauss is reflected in his own sets of waltzes, his love for Hungarian music in his gypsy pieces. A similar thing happens in certain movements of his chamber music, in the "Rondo alla zingarese" of his G minor piano quartet (Op. 25), for example. One also finds allusions to Slavic melodies. In 1891, consistently following Schubert, the model of his songs, Brahms wrote his magnificent string quintet in G (Op. 111), a work filled with Viennese atmosphere, distinguished, as has been justly observed, by specifically Austrian local color. But the Austrian accent is also heard elsewhere in Brahms's works.

It was not easy for Brahms to establish himself in musical Vienna. In one of his letters he boasts of "the Viennese public, which stimulates one so differently from our own," but this was written soon after his arrival, when he was winning an audience as a pianist. His major works were at first more warmly received in certain cities of northern Germany than in Vienna, where such dissent arose as real leaders have always to contend with. Despite invitations addressed to him from London, Paris, St. Petersburg, Rome, Milan, Brussels, New York, and Boston, he never appeared in concert abroad. That he never visited England and France is doubtless due in part to his not having mastered foreign languages. On the other hand he visited Italy repeatedly for recreation with his friends. Yet the impressions he received there, pleasant as they were, left no direct mark on his work, the opinions of others to the contrary.

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Brahms's works, following a universal rule, either reflect an experience or originate in a musical germ; occasionally they are the

result of a combination of these forces. He worked conscientiously and with exemplary thoroughness. Sometimes he relied on sketches; at other times, especially during his morning walks, he dispensed with them. Most of these sketches he destroyed himself; few have been preserved. The better part of the work came before the first draft, which was then subjected to much improvement and revision. Imagination and intellect supplement one another; in Brahms's music the intellectual element often predominates. He built with the most laborious precision, as if acknowledging even in his creative work the validity of the biblical admonition: "In the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat bread." To a lady acquaintance of mine who had submitted compositions for criticism Brahms remarked, with fine, biting irony: "I did not know that composing was so easy." Not invention, not the idea itself, but the use one made of the idea and the way one handled it were the vital things for him.

A composer is surely entitled to derive and borrow from others, provided only that he has the ability to treat their ideas in his own way. Critics discover all sorts of "reminiscences" in Brahms's music; they ought not to waste time pursuing such dilettantish investigations. Every period and every style has its *clichés*, general and individual. Brahms, stemming from the classicists and the romanticists, agrees melodically now with the one group, now with the other, particularly with Schubert and Schumann, also with Mendelssohn and Chopin, even with Wagner. On rare occasions he deliberately quotes his historic models—Viotti, for example, and others. The case of the Urio-Handel Dettingen *Te Deum* was not unknown to him; musical history abounds with such incidents. It lies in the nature of artistic growth that the apprentice should follow the example of his predecessors unless his genius is so original that he throws all precedent aside. But the master who has won his independence may also look backward without prejudice to his individuality. Wagner, composing his *Parsifal*, allowed the score of Liszt's *Heilige Elisabeth* to influence him, yet created a thoroughly original and inspired work. For all the change his style underwent, Wagner was working methodically to perfect it. This is true of every great master.

Brahms has his own, highly individual style. We speak, indeed, of a Brahms idiom. It is his outstanding contribution. If it is to be grasped as a whole, its qualities must be critically analyzed, the several branches of his art and phases of his development considered. Here I can do this only in outline, and, to avoid repetitions in the course of my discussion, I shall treat these

branches and phases together in their relation to one another, presenting my conclusions in a resumé at the end.

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Logical formal construction was his main objective, and as time went on he gradually succeeded in attaining it in one type of movement after another. As a concert pianist he included the smaller romantic forms in his programs, partly in deference to the demands of his day, partly from personal inclination. He published little of the kind at first; later he made up for this, writing capriccios, intermezzos, romances, and virtuoso studies as well as pieces in the more extended small forms, such as the ballad, the fantasy, and the rhapsody. But even so he tends to favor absolute forms (*geschlossene Formen*), to concentrate on the fundamental forms of the classicists: sonata-allegro and variation.

When he does not use the sonata form for the first movement of a cyclic instrumental work, he makes amends in the finale.<sup>9</sup> And when he does not use the sonata form as a whole, he retains certain of its structural tendencies or combines it with the rondo form, just as the classicists sometimes use the sonata form as basis for their rondos. In other sonata movements he uses elements of the fugue as connecting links.<sup>10</sup> His skill in combining the sonata and variation forms becomes more and more marked, reaching its highest perfection in his last period when it affects all the movements of the cycle. Kretzschmar does well to call Brahms "the grand master of the art of variation." For all the transparency of his treatment of the sonata form in cyclic works and in certain compositions in one movement, each individual example is *sui generis*; no one resembles another, any more than in nature one fully developed tree resembles another of the same species. As I shall show later, his use of sonata form extended to every class of vocal music.

The more nearly he approaches his ideal in sonata form, the broader his themes become. At first he is influenced by the romanticists who use the form without conviction, without penetrating its depths or scaling its heights. The "poetic idea," the poetic intention is their primary concern; thematic work becomes more and more a secondary consideration. Here Brahms parts company with his romantic friends. Beginning as a worker on a

<sup>9</sup>In the piano trio with violin and horn Op. 40 (1868), the so-called "Horn Trio."

<sup>10</sup>In the string quintet Op. 88.

small scale, he ends as a master of the grand style in the classical sense, notably in the sense in which it is applied to Beethoven.

His themes grow organically, though it is not in every one of his works that he realizes this ideal. At first he sometimes uses several themes in a sonata movement, in the B major trio Op. 8 (1854), for example, and in the G minor piano quartet Op. 25 (1863). In the revision of Opus 8 undertaken in 1889 (published in 1891) the several themes of the original, freely formed from a single motive, shrink to one principal theme, opposed now to a second, independent subject; in the other movements, too, similar changes give new force to the design. The progressive development of his skill in thematic work permits him to limit the number of themes he uses. As Goethe says: "Inner discipline reveals the master."

His thematic work affects the formation of his themes, the connection of his episodes, his contrapuntal voice-leading, and the inner continuity of single movements of his cycles, both instrumental and vocal. In this connection I ask leave to quote what I have said in my *Style in Music*:<sup>11</sup> "No composer since Beethoven has carried thematic work to greater lengths than Brahms. There is scarcely a means of homophonic or polyphonic development he leaves untried." Here I shall make this reservation: Brahms did not carry on the imitative polyphonic development that culminates with Beethoven in the Grand Fugue Op. 133 "tantôt libre, tantôt recherchée," intended as the finale of the B-flat quartet Op. 130, but set aside for another finale in response to a general demand. Not until the generation after Brahms was this tendency organically continued; artists in sympathy with it play the fugue as finale. Brahms's friend von Bülow played it as a piece for string ensemble on his tours with the Meiningen orchestra.

Brahms's methods of work are most validly and convincingly displayed in the development sections of his movements in sonata form. Unlike the romanticists whom he resembles so closely in other respects, he is not content with mere transpositions of the themes presented in the exposition; in the main, he develops the motives of which they are composed, treats them contrapuntally, reorders them in groups, and reconnects them thematically. I hope I shall not stand convicted of *lèse-majesté* if I say that his motive- and theme-combinations occasionally seem labored, taking on the character of make-shift filling-in, that outward form sometimes stifles inward movement. His very way of working, which despite my objection is in itself perfectly legitimate, may

<sup>11</sup>I (2d ed., Leipzig, 1929), 270.

have prejudiced him against contemporaries who followed other formulas.

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Brahms provides inward and outward movement in all the voices, and if the leading voices are the upper—and to a lesser extent the lowermost, the other voices take part in the accompaniment as *obbligati*, their function being one that I have summed up in Beethoven's phrase "obbligato accompaniment" (*obligates Akkompagnement*). In keeping with the "openwork style" (*durchbrochener Stil*), the principal melody wanders from one voice to another. Especially in the chamber music each voice seeks to have its say, now as mere harmonic filling-in, now in free counterpoint (quasi-polyphonically), now in strict counterpoint.<sup>12</sup> Variants and true variations are his principal tools. We know his independent variations from our statistical survey; other examples form single movements of cyclic works. Technically and from the point of view of content his Haydn variations (op. 56) are his outstanding achievement as an independent set; among those that form parts of cycles, the finale of the fourth symphony is preëminent.

As Brahms himself held, the bass of the theme and its extensions constitute the underlying, dominant structural element in a composition; its sensual attraction, on the other hand, is due in no small part to the leading melody, in the sense defined above. Primarily in his songs, but also in other compositions of his, this melody is rooted in the soil of German folk-music. External sensuality never gains the upper hand; his character runs counter to such an aspiration. But despite this chaste reserve, his tenderness can be touching, his harshness thrilling. He avoids formal phrases and resorts here and there to neutral contours (*Mittelgedanken*), favoring the notes of the arpeggio in forming his themes. At other times he goes beyond his classical models, uses wider intervals, seldom introducing chromatic tones. As regards embellishment he is extremely economical. Long trills serve now and then to accompany or to herald conflict; in this respect his procedure, like his moderation, is specifically Brahmsian. Exceptionally a turn (*Doppelschlag*) promotes heightened feeling.

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<sup>12</sup>To complete what I have said about Brahms's polyphony I should emphasize that in contrapuntal writing, notably in the fugue style, he exhibits a growing tendency to follow Bach rather than Beethoven.



His harmony is robust, never effeminate, and as far removed from sentimentality as his melody. Without excluding chromatic alteration and enharmonic change it rests as a rule on a firm diatonic basis. Sometimes there are abrupt changes of key, unlooked-for clashes, and sudden transitions; he modulates even within the themes themselves, courts harmonic friction and suspension, and abandons himself at times, as in the D minor piano concerto (Op. 15), to the pure joy of dissonance. "I am very fond of discords," he says, "but they must come on strong beats and be resolved smoothly and gently." On rare occasions he effaces tonal boundaries and, conforming to the usage of his school, rapidly interchanges major and minor. In his choice of keys he adheres, in general, to the classical and early romantic tradition, recognizing no immutable psycho-physiological key-character. While the classicists tend to progress toward the dominant and related harmonies, he leans rather toward the subdominant side and draws heavily on the mediant keys, without losing sight of the fundamental dominant-subdominant antithesis. When his texts suggest it, he uses the church modes, and although this is more a result of his historical studies than of any inward impulse, he assimilates the strange idiom perfectly and makes it entirely his own. His preference is for the Dorian mode, which he uses, so far as I can judge, in a new way.

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Brahms is particularly resourceful and independent in his rhythmic combinations and in this side of his music paves the way for the future. He rides roughshod over the regular accents of the measure, sometimes with the aid of syncopation; affects elisions, irregularities, little phrases of three, five, and seven bars, rapid alternations of two-, three-, and five-bar phrases, simultaneous combinations of divergent metres in different voices; mixes binary and ternary rhythms ( $6/8$  and  $3/4$ , for example); combines  $3/4$  and  $4/4$  in one time-signature; and betrays a genuinely romantic weakness for  $5/4$  and  $7/4$  constructions. He interpolates *hemiolæ*; there are instances, indeed, of his use of two different varieties, side by side, or one above the other. With rhythm, in short, Brahms allows himself greater liberties than with the other style-elements I have discussed. Yet I am disinclined to explain this as imitation of the masters of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries;<sup>13</sup>

<sup>13</sup>Brahms knew no earlier polyphony.

it is his character that asserts itself and finds expression here, his desire to outdo (*überstülpen*) his fellows and his friends.

In indicating tempo Brahms shows more restraint, both in his general directions and in their agogic modifications. He calls, of course, for the alternation of slow and fast sections and makes most elaborate demands on the performer in his romantic piano pieces and in the slow movements of his cycles—*con intimissimo sentimento*, for example, *con molto espressione*, and *molto appassionato*. I am tempted to recognize a special application to Brahms's rhythm in the title of Schumann's essay. "New Paths"—that was a prophetic phrase. This interpretation, however, appears not to have occurred to Brahms himself.

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As regards the spread and cultivation of Brahms's music, the instrumental works share honors today with the *German Requiem* and certain of the songs and choral compositions.<sup>14</sup> The piano was his point of departure; his excursions into the other branches of instrumental composition met with equal success and are of equal historic importance.

Brahms was a master pianist, his technical equipment outstanding, his singing touch laying hold of the listener whom he held enthralled, a self-effacing artist, not a vainglorious virtuoso. In improvisation, too, he tempered imagination with finished craftsmanship. His keyboard style abounds in full chords and wide stretches, rich sonority and polyphonic detail; it discovers new possibilities in the high and low registers and makes use of figures, arpeggios, leaps, and detached chords, even in contrapuntal passages. Taking advantage of the improved action of the modern piano, it borders on the orchestral treatment of the instrument in some of his pieces, while avoiding external imitation of the individual orchestral voices.

Brahms leaves program music alone, remaining purely a tone-poet. Turning his back on the Weimar group, he occupies himself primarily with "absolute music," to use an expression for which, quite frankly, I have no use. In the first number of his Opus 10, the ballad for piano "after the Scottish ballad 'Edward,'" though he appears at first to be following the poem, he offers no external portrayal of the scene between mother and son; twenty-two years later he set their lines to music in the first number of his Opus 75,<sup>15</sup>

<sup>14</sup>See above, p. 119.

<sup>15</sup>*Ballads and Romances for Alto and Tenor.*



the "Scottish Ballad from Herder's Folk-Songs." If, as an exception, he heads an instrumental movement with the title or text of a poem, he does so in order to indicate the tone-poetic content of his theme and its treatment. As a help to understanding, the quotation justifies itself. His views on the poetic explanation of instrumental music agree with those of his friends Billroth and Rudorff—and with Mendelssohn's, for the latter expressed himself to much the same effect: in listening to music, purely musical experiences are the proper source of artistic pleasure—only in subsequent description are poetic associations permissible.

The use of the expression "leading motive" with reference to Brahms's themes is thoroughly inappropriate and pointless. Instead of explaining the nature of his music, it actually distorts it. As I myself can testify, even Wagner protested against the ever-increasing emphasis on "leading motives" in commentaries on his works. In the music drama and in program music "leading motives",<sup>16</sup> symbolizing events, characters, and ideas, are in order; to seek them in pure instrumental music is confusing. Reproached with his indifference toward program music, Brahms asked to be left in peace, free to go his own way. Unshaken, he resumed his journey, continuing to paint in tones. His ascent took time. The path was beset with difficulties, but it led to the summit of success.

The first fully privileged instrumental work that the pianist-composer wrote for his own use was the D minor piano concerto (Op. 15); a work that suffered many changes during the transition stage before it took final shape, when the composer, who set it directly for two pianos, looked on it now as a symphonic composition, now as a piano piece; a three-movement cycle in which the piano and orchestra are evenly matched, opposing and abetting one another on an equal footing. The treatment of the solo instrument is no less idiomatic here than in the later concertos.<sup>17</sup> Bitterly opposed for years—the D minor concerto had a particularly hard fight for recognition—these compositions belong today to the standard concert repertory. They employ the traditional three-movement form; only the B-flat concerto has four movements. The finale of the first concerto is a rondo, as classical usage prescribes; in the later concertos, as a result of a gradually changing attitude toward form, the distinction between rondo-finale and finale in sonata form is resolved.

Despite the sharp dividing-line that separates Brahms's chamber music from his orchestral music, there is an organic

<sup>16</sup>Wagner himself uses the expression "leading themes" (*Leithemen*).

<sup>17</sup>See the statistical survey, p. 118 above.

connection between his work in these two departments, just as there is between his concertos and symphonies: his two serenades constitute the genetic connecting-link. The first of these (Op. 11), in seven movements, is a direct descendant of the classical divertimento, set for full orchestra—a hybrid (*Zwittergestalt*), as Brahms himself conceded. The second (Op. 16), for small orchestra without violins, is a romantic product, as its instrumentation reveals; Brahms intended it for performance at chamber-music recitals. Together they form an introduction to the great symphonic works.

With Brahms, the outer movements of the cyclic structure constitute its fixed poles; gaining steadily in breadth and in depth of insight, they attain monumental grandeur in his symphonies. The inner movements, on the other hand, come to occupy a subordinate position, taking on an almost neutral character (*Mittelcharakter*) or reconciling antagonistic moods and impulses, descending sometimes to the parlance of the suite. In his chamber music the middle movements occasionally touch on the free forms of the piano pieces and may be mutually related and formally balanced. Ideal correspondence is essential if cyclic equilibrium is to be established. In his orchestral cycles, as in his chamber music, these middle movements hover, as it were, between the classic and the romantic and tend to favor the latter; even here, however, Brahms permits himself no relaxation of his rigorous methods. Wagner reproached Brahms with having used the chamber-music style in his symphonies. It is to the middle movements that this criticism is best applied. And it is in the middle movements that Brahms is surpassed by Bruckner. Drawing on his piety, Bruckner gives to his adagios a note of exaltation and intense pathos that is foreign to Brahms. "A long adagio is the most difficult thing of all," Brahms confessed. Drawing on the folk-life about him, Bruckner holds in his scherzos to the atmosphere of extreme classicism. Brahms uses the term "scherzo" only in the early piano sonatas and in chamber music written prior to about 1868; in later works, and in the symphonies, which have no proper scherzos, it is precisely the neutral character he gives to his middle movements which obliges him to abandon the scherzo type. The historian ought not to undertake the ordering of values; he must present the facts as they are. But while estimates may be left to the true friends of art, the historian too is presumably entitled to form estimates of his own, provided only that he does not regard them as binding for all time.

That Brahms wrought as a tone-poet in all the branches of instrumental music he cultivated, scarcely requires further demonstration. I cannot bring myself to explain in words the poetic content of his works or to clothe in language the vagaries of emotion and imagination. Accordingly—yet with all due respect to the poetic, or rather poeticizing (*poetisierend*) enthusiasm of Max Kalbeck, the writer who piously collected and published biographical material on the master he worshipped<sup>18</sup>—I also reject fantastic interpretations of that great orchestral work, the variations on a theme by Haydn. But in these matters exaggeration is easier to excuse than disparagement. To the disgust of those who know art and truly serve the artist, morality-ridden pseudo-historians have, only recently, unfurled the banner of sophistry. Attending and stimulating the work of composition, poetic ideas are a factor in Brahms's instrumental music from its very beginning in Opus 1, the four-movement piano sonata in C: its second movement, an andante, is headed "After an Old-German minnesong."<sup>19</sup> In the F minor sonata (Op. 5) the second movement has this motto:

Der Abend dämmert, das Mondlicht scheint,  
Da sind zwei Menschen in Liebe vereint  
Und halten sich selig umfängen.<sup>20</sup>

The sonata has five movements! The fourth, an "intermezzo" (in B-flat minor), bears the subtitle "Rückblick" ("Retrospect").

Any number of thematic quotations, references to his own works and to those of others, have been pointed out in Brahms's music, some of them by the composer himself. Brahms aims to demonstrate formally how serviceable these ideas are for thematic and tone-poetic treatment, to turn old material to new uses, both ideal and practical. The most subtle, carefully considered, and remarkably finished instance of this is the treatment of the theme "Chorale St. Antoni" in a series of variations for orchestra (Op. 56a).<sup>21</sup> The programmatic interpretation of this piece has already been rejected;<sup>22</sup> I may say here that it has to do with Saint Anthony's resigned perseverance in the face of temptation and sets up a chain of associations that is more of a hindrance than a help

<sup>18</sup>See above, p. 113 (note 1).

<sup>19</sup>"Verstohlen geht der Mond auf" ("Stealthily the Moon Rises").

<sup>20</sup>The evening falls, the moonlight shines,  
Two mortals are joined in love  
And hold one another in rapturous embrace.

<sup>21</sup>Opus 56b, an arrangement for two pianos, is, as Brahms says, an alternative "version."

<sup>22</sup>See above.

in listening to and enjoying the music. Brahms's friend Billroth was reminded of the last chorus of the Blessed Boys in *Faust*: "With mighty limbs already he towers above us." What attracts me in this cycle, vaguely reminiscent of the succession of movements in a suite or sonata, is the mysterious way in which the single variations are opposed to one another, their inner continuity, their finished artistic treatment, their moving emotional content, their colorful, attractive dress adapting itself with such variety to the character of the several sections, presenting the whole as an indissoluble unit, firmly supported by *bassi ostinati*, neatly joining the parts together with their various tempos, their changing rhythmic combinations, their superpositions of motives.

Brahms takes infinite pains with the distribution of instrumental color in this work, yet when it was written, in his fortieth year, he was fully aware of the imperfections of his orchestral technic, conscious that, despite numerous preliminary studies, he was not yet ready to meet the supreme test in composing for orchestra, to attain the full realization of his ideals in the composition of a symphony. At thirty, indeed, a master of the technical side of chamber music, he had made a serious miscalculation with respect to color in his piano quintet Opus 34 and, because of its overlaid string parts, had been obliged to rewrite it as a sonata for two pianos. He never rid himself of a certain thickness in instrumentation. His exuberant piano style tempered his approach to chamber music and left him with certain fixed ideas about sound which help to explain why he wisely experimented so long<sup>23</sup> and deferred until so late (1873) the publication of his first two string quartets, bringing out the last one three years later. His instrumentation derives from the sonority of the classical orchestra. He makes a distinction between "orchestra" and "large orchestra," uses augmented brasses (four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, and exceptionally a bass tuba), rarely calling for third kettledrum or triangle, in addition to the regular complement of strings and woodwinds, and experiments now and then with other supplementary instruments. In his youthful romantic period he uses the harp as an accompanying instrument as early as 1862, combining it with two horns to suit the poems set to music in his Opus 17, part-songs for women's chorus, the first of which begins "Es tönt ein voller Harfenklang" ("The full notes of a harp are heard"). Acute as his sensitivity to tonal combinations is in other respects, he remains impervious to the effect of color-blends in transition passages. The dramatic sound-

<sup>23</sup>See the statistical survey, p. 119 above.

magic of the Wagnerian opera has as little charm for him as the seductive orchestral artifices of the composers of program music.

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Brahms's vocal compositions, as we have seen, are spread over his entire life. Historical studies give assurance to his part-leading and clarify his treatment of voices. On the side of tonality, he discovers new possibilities of contrast and combination in major and minor, ground won by his contemporaries and immediate predecessors, only falling back on the church modes now and again in a *cappella* writing; on the side of design, he casts his vocal music, even his songs, in instrumental forms, notably in the sonata form, as pointed out above, subjecting it to all sorts of modifications and naturally reducing its scale. His command of the resources of vocal polyphony is remarkable, and he makes extensive use of them.

He follows humanity from the cradle to the grave—and beyond—in joy and in sorrow, in despair and in assurance, in death and in eternal life, as “blissful gods” and as “suffering mortals”—these antitheses, sometimes intermingled, are the subjects of his song, imbued with romantic yearning. But here, even in the vocal works and especially in those on a large scale, intense emotion is expressed by the instruments alone, evidence of the power of the tonal art, which can speak when language and poetry must remain silent.

Brahms's sacred compositions do not have a liturgical purpose, though he sometimes sets a liturgical text to music. Among the studies he destroyed was an unaccompanied mass in canon form; only the Benedictus has been preserved. A few of his vocal works are used in the Protestant church service.

At the head of the texts Brahms set to music stands the Bible, and in his selections from the Old and New Testaments Brahms is his own poet. It is impossible to single out a favorite poet in writing of Brahms—every poem he sets is his favorite. But almost as if in response to local pride, he has a special weakness for the poets of northwestern Germany. Only in the larger choral works and cantatas for chorus and solo voices that are grouped about the *German Requiem* does he turn to the great names of poetry—to Goethe, in his Rhapsody, his *Gesang der Parzen*, and his *Rinaldo*; to Schiller, in his *Nänie*; to Hölderlein, in his *Schicksalslied*; and in his *Triumphlied* and his *German Requiem* to that overpowering poetic monument, the Bible.

The *German Requiem*, completed in Brahms's thirty-fifth year, is the work about which his creative activity centers, his supreme attainment in vocal composition. Bridging the gap between the Here and the Beyond, it portrays the distress and suffering of mankind and speaks, too, of the Last Judgment and of the Resurrection, for to bring comfort to humanity is Brahms's highest aim. Here is supreme spiritual revelation, independent of denominational allegiance. The seven sections are thematically interrelated in a variety of ways. It makes no difference for whom the work was written—whether for Schumann, or for Brahms's mother, or for both, or for neither; the question is wholly irrelevant, a superfluous "literary" controversy. The *German Requiem* emanates from the will to serve all mankind—the East and the West, the Old World and the New; it is a tone-poetic transfiguration of death and life. He who has taken this work to himself and actively experienced it knows not the fear of death, or has conquered that fear. Fortified by faith, this conquest goes hand in hand with purest love and noblest devotion to humanity and the Almighty.

Like the bright sunshine that is also present and active in the colors of the rainbow, this same revelation appears under different guises in the various moods and trends of Brahms's songs. Written for a single voice, or for two or more solo voices, they range in form from the simple strophic design to the type without repetitions ("durchkomponiert"), unified through the use of motives. Utilizing in them every resource of his art, Brahms is governed at all times by a due respect for poetic and musical context.

When the poems permit, Brahms occasionally groups his songs together to form a connected cycle; sometimes it is fantasy that dictates such a union. Modeled on the song-cycles of Beethoven, Schubert, and Schumann, his cycle of fifteen romances from Tieck's "Magelone," embracing compositions widely separated as to date, published between 1865 and 1868, is a romantic love story in purely lyric form, as far removed as possible from dramatic characterization. Attempts to stage this cycle as a *Liederspiel* are aimless and inappropriate, and the same applies to dramatizations of Schubert's "Müllerlieder." These art works deal, not with dramatic characters, but with lyric moods, and theatricals serve only to spoil (*verballhornen*), disfigure, and distort their musical expression. One writer actually outdoes himself by pronouncing the "Magelone" cycle the "romantic opera" κατ' ἔξοχον. Brahms's admiration for the poetry of that changeable (*wetterwendisch*) philosopher of culture and religion, G. F. Daumer, induced him to bring together a cycle of eight of Daumer's



poems in praise of love and nature in his Opus 58 (1871). In 1858 he had published another cycle of nine (five by Platen, four by Daumer) as Opus 32; Kalbeck takes a poetic view of the two books of this set when he says that they constitute "a lyric novellette in two cycles." Brahms groups choruses together as well as solo songs—*Marienlieder* for mixed chorus (Op. 22), then motets with related texts, also duets, and vocal quartets such as the "Zigeunerlieder" and the "Liebesliederwalzer" with piano four-hands (Op. 52 and 65), to eighteen and fourteen poems by Daumer, the voice parts *ad libitum* in Opus 52; there are even purely instrumental cycles—waltzes and Hungarian dances—all of them in numerous arrangements, most of which he worked out himself.

The most sublime of all Brahms cycles is the set of four "Ernste Gesänge" to texts from Ecclesiastes, Sirach, and the First Epistle to the Corinthians, written for bass voice but equally effective when sung by an alto, published as Opus 121 in 1896, the last composition to appear during the author's lifetime. It closes ideally the round of his work, in which he celebrates in all its infinitely varied manifestations the love that threads its way through it all, a heavenly ribbon. "Liebestreu" was Brahms's first masterpiece, the "Ernste Gesänge" his last.

A long series of German folk-song arrangements and children's folk-songs remains to be mentioned. These too form cycles of another kind, the accumulation of years. The children's songs are touching reminders of his love for the young, pointing the way for the new movement in musical child-training that was soon to come, more valuable than many a product of the musical "Jugendbewegung" of today.

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Brahms does not aim at that which is superficially popular, not even in the sense Mozart employs in writing to his father and counsellor that he takes into consideration what is "popular." The works with which he first attracted a wider circle of supporters were not his best; on the contrary, he had to force his way step by step into the domain of understanding, and his deepest, most consummate, most significant works were the very ones that were at first appreciated only by a small group. Even his best friends often—indeed, usually—denied the works that were artistically the most successful. Mozart met with the same kind of opposition; when the two piano-quartets of 1785 and 1786 (Köchel 478 and 493) were severely criticized, their all-too-submissive

author abandoned altogether the composition of chamber music with piano. Yet these same piano quartets rank with his noblest creations; object lessons for the distant future, they surpass the entire piano quartet production of the period immediately following. Brahms, beginning where Mozart left off, became one of his worthiest successors—probably the worthiest of all his successors in chamber music with piano. Among Brahms's instrumental creations, his works in this category rank next to his orchestral works, a department of composition in which he is more inclined to follow Beethoven. Some historians and commentators compare Brahms's first symphony with Beethoven's fifth, his third with the "Eroica."

Yet in symphonic music too, for all his adherence to tradition, Brahms struck out for himself. And here too the complexity of his character led him to favor mixed moods; after all the emotional conflict that takes place, the end does not invariably proclaim pure joy or victorious exultation. His pessimistic, rebellious side, however, does not have the last word that prevails at the end of his series of four symphonies. The finale of the fourth, the wondrous chaconne, belongs to another sphere, beyond joy and sorrow, as it were, beyond good and evil; in this movement the master ponders the eternal riddle of existence. I venture to say with Goethe: Earth's enigma here grows to event. The movement rests on the firm basis of the *ostinato*, and no matter what changes the variations bring—whether conflict or comfort, whether confusion or clarity, whether storm clouds or clear sky—the God-fearing one is unshaken in his faith, content with the rôle he has chosen for himself. This is not the language of pessimism. Brahms knew Schopenhauer's works, but they did not undermine his strength. Yet, as we have seen, he was not absolutely optimistic as our classicists were. In the finale of his second symphony Brahms gives way to the joyous mood of the Haydn finale. But even in Haydn's finales the note of agitation and suspense is not altogether absent.

A trait that distinguishes Brahms's symphonic technic is his use of the "motto," announced at the beginning and carried through all the movements in transformations that are sometimes difficult to recognize, so complicated is his procedure. Occasionally it is thematically extended to form an independent melody, to which the theme proper then serves as an accompaniment. In the first symphony the motto is *c*, *c*-sharp, *d*, in the second *d*, *c*-sharp, *d*, and in the third *f*', *a*'-flat, *f*'', the call of a friend of his youth in altered form, a motive that reappears in other com-



positions by Brahms in all sorts of variants, in major and minor, with a sixth replacing the octave, and so forth. In the fourth symphony the second theme of the first movement may be regarded as the quasi-motto of the second and third movements. In complex thematic continuity Brahms is scarcely to be outdone. This, again, is in keeping with his character.

Thus Brahms realized the artist's highest ideal: the development of personality in individual style. I have already ventured a preliminary characterization of this style;<sup>24</sup> single aspects of it I discussed in the investigations that followed. Here I shall present a brief resumé.

In the small forms Brahms derives from the romanticists. The young Brahms occasionally signs himself "Johannes Kreisler, junior," like a follower of that romantic figure, E. T. A. Hoffmann. A part of his ideal world originates in the sphere of romantic sentiment. But for the romanticists' progressive dissolution of the sonata type he substitutes formal concentration. No one disproved the fable of the disintegration of form in the works of Beethoven's last period more convincingly than Brahms. The clear thinker knew what he was about. On the authority of von Bülow, to whom we owe the phrase "the three great B's" (Bach, Beethoven, and Brahms), Brahms himself "demonstrated conclusively that Beethoven at no time held himself with more rigorous Spartan severity to the laws of musical form than in the most imaginative and original of his last sonatas and quartets." Wagner maintained the contrary, prejudiced by his fiction that pure instrumental music, having culminated and ended with Beethoven, was to be absorbed by music-drama. Brahms's sonatas for piano and violin and for piano and violoncello are direct descendants of Beethoven's—I ask leave to add this here—imbued, of course, with romantic emotional content. His individuality asserts itself on every hand. Whether he makes use of historic materials, turning back as far as the fifteenth century, or whether he takes the works of his immediate forerunners as models, he carries transformation to the point of perfectly uniform stylistic assimilation, in keeping with his time, his individuality, and his character.

I believe that I have been both just and reverent in indicating the weaknesses of Brahms's work. He appears to have been fully aware of them himself. His comments on the great masters of the past show this unmistakably. His judgment of his contemporaries was more reserved. That he kept aloof from opera proves con-

<sup>24</sup>See above, pp. 123 and 125.

clusively that the great lyricist in vocal and instrumental music was conscious of his limitations. Opera and marriage were two questions about which Brahms was never able to make up his mind. His relation toward Wagner was as contradictory as his attitude toward innocent, lovely creatures of the fair sex, by whom he was inwardly attracted and outwardly repelled. These psychological problems—some of them belong to psychopathology—merit further investigation. I know Brahms's enthusiasm for Mozart's principal operas—no one was more overjoyed than he after a performance of *Don Giovanni* under Mahler; never before had he heard such a performance, he insisted as he embraced the conductor. And how delighted he was with Bizet's *Carmen*!

That Brahms's nature is opposed to Bruckner's, I have tried to explain.<sup>25</sup> Yet the musical historian grasps these two composers as belonging to one period, however much they may differ with respect to melody, thematic work, counterpoint, harmony, and form—however different their individual styles. They complete one another—the Protestant and the Catholic, the free thinker and the orthodox believer, the man of broad culture and the provincial pedant; both are superlatively sincere.

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I shall not say that Brahms found many followers. His work was more a summing-up than a beginning, most of all, perhaps, a reconciliation. He exerted an influence on a good many musicians, especially in Germany, some of them composers who attained independence—on the young Richard Strauss, who subsequently turned, as we know, to program music; on Max Reger, who orchestrated some of his songs; on Stanford in England; on Martucci in Italy; and on Dvořák, whose music he admired and promoted. Like Brahms, Mahler retained the fundamental forms of the classicists, combining poetry and music in single movements of his symphonies. Rimsky-Korsakov, Glazounov, and other leaders of the Russian school have paid tribute to his music, and the cultivation of his works in America compels admiration. His art is acknowledged and influential in every country that can boast a musical culture. English writers share honors with Germans in the study and portrayal of his life and works, and Americans too have turned their attention to this field. It may seem trivial that I mention the part the phonograph record has

<sup>25</sup>See above, p. 132.

played in spreading the appreciation of certain works of his—in this the manufacturers in question honor themselves, especially in England and America. Following the laudable example of the German Brahms-Gesellschaft, these countries also have their Brahms Festivals. One need have no concern about the future of Brahms's masterpieces; they can maintain themselves side by side with our modern music, whose serious adherents ought not to deny the value and importance of Brahms's contribution. In a sense, Brahms pointed the way for modern music in his use of dissonances (*Reibungen*).

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In our discordant age, sympathetic understanding of the genuine and the true is a necessity. Only love can raise us above heresy and chaos to a better existence. Brahms's instrumental works and the poems he chose for vocal setting speak of love—of "faithful love" and of charity towards our neighbor. It is this second aspect of love that is celebrated unforgettably in the fourth number of Brahms's last-published cycle. I bridge the gap between the musical example given above and the following quotation from the last-mentioned work—in this way we celebrate most impressively the centenary:

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.

And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.

And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.

For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.

a Più moto

Nun a - ber blei - bet Glau - be,

mp

Hoff - nung, Lie - be, die - se drei — *etc.*  
*ritard.*

**b** Sostenuto  
 die Lie - be ist die grö - -  
 - se - ste un - ter ih - - nen. *etc.*

(1 Corinthians xiii)

(Translated by W. Oliver Strunk.)

## RECOLLECTIONS OF BRAHMS

By SIGISMOND STOJOWSKI

I HAD the privilege of knowing Brahms when he was still in his full vigor and glory, and when I, as a young aspirant yet in my 'teens, brought to him the tribute of my awe and reverence. However insignificant that tribute may have been, Brahms seemed not insensitive to it. Contrary to certain current opinions and practices, youth need not always be contemptuous of its elders, nor are the latter necessarily indifferent to the thought of tomorrow. Brahms was conservative, to be sure, and had little patience with the indiscretions and absurdities into which hero-worship is liable to degenerate. But he seemed to welcome the quiet homage of a youth from a foreign land, which, perhaps more than the noisy manifestations at home, carried with it a taste of his spreading fame. Others have told the tale of a gruff and boorish Brahms; I have seen him only accessible, sympathetic, benevolent.

Brahms has been depicted as rough-hewn and moody, brusque of manner and sharp of tongue, impatient of restraint, brooking no interference, unconcerned with social amenities to the point of ungraciousness, intolerant of human foibles and scornful of humanity at large—his whole attitude tainted, as it were, by a kind of bitterness due to the hardships of his youth and never quite outgrown in the sunshine of triumphant maturity. But we have the testimony of intimate friends—and Brahms inspired scores of loyal friendships along the path of life—showing that this hard outward shell was merely a protection, artfully devised, for a deeply sensitive nature, a tender, generous, most kindly heart. His very appearance, too, rather belied the forbidding legend which he himself helped to weave. As I remember him, the short and stocky figure seems much exaggerated in pictures. The beautiful, truly Olympian head is, of course, familiar. It figured, once upon a time, in a text-book of geography, as a perfect racial specimen—of which fact, it is said, Brahms felt not a little proud. Paul Bourget may be right, after all, in affirming that physical vanity, even when carefully hidden, is deeply entrenched in masculine psychology. I certainly remember that, at the evening receptions of the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde in Vienna, this Jupiter's beard was perfectly trimmed, the four-winged "Masche," or tie, neatly made, and that Brahms invariably appeared well-groomed, good-

humored and pleasantly sociable. The high forehead bespoke the powerful intellect of a master-builder in sounds, the quick speech and reddish complexion denoted a passionate temperament; but the candid eyes, so intensely blue—"forget-me-nots" Sigmund Münz called them—radiated gentleness and kindliness, retaining an almost child-like expression under the gray mane.

Above all things, I remember Brahms as having had a perfectly simple and straightforward manner—the eternal hall-mark, probably, of true greatness. One utterance I recall that seems to point to certain peculiarities of attitude: "When one writes a letter of introduction to a friend about somebody, one is bound to speak well of the person recommended. Therefore, it means nothing. When someone comes to me with a letter of introduction, I swiftly turn him out (*schmeiss' ihn heraus*).” Thus he explained to me why, after all, he withheld a letter of introduction to Hans Richter, which he had spontaneously proffered.

Fortunately, however, I was introduced to Brahms, not by a letter, but by a common friend. After what I had heard about him, I was surprised to find him not only approachable, but actually engaging, even polite. When I was introduced, the name of my teacher Delibes, in Paris, was mentioned. Promptly a compliment to him was extended: "Yes, we know his ballets over here—very charming music indeed." Shortly before, Delibes had been cordially received and applauded in Vienna. But when I asked, rather naively, why Brahms never came to Paris to conduct one of his symphonies at the Conservatoire, the tart reply was: "That's quite unnecessary; I know my symphonies!" Awkwardly enough, I was trying to make conversation. I wondered about his preference for a home in Vienna: "Yes," he answered, "I like to reside in Vienna where one lives almost in the country. Every year the momentous question comes up: What novelty shall we perform, *The Creation* or *The Seasons*? Whereas in Berlin, it is incredible all the things I had to live through." He could not have more tersely epitomized the charm of restful, sleepy Vienna, and memories of stimulating but vexing trips to Berlin.

I saw Brahms in Ischl, the lovely Austrian mountain-resort, where he used to spend his summers in the nineties. Another annual "Kurgast" was Leschetitzky, at whose house I was to play a youthful piano concerto just completed. Without any solicitation on my part, Brahms exclaimed: "I'll try to come to hear you, too, if I can spare the time." But he did not turn up, having, very evidently, something better to do.



A few days later, in fear and trembling, with the manuscript of a string quartet under my arm, I found my way to his own residence at the top of the village. This house stood in a garden where Brahms, in shirt-sleeves, was busily digging. We went inside, and for some twenty minutes or more—which seemed to me an eternity—he kept on reading my manuscript in silence. Suddenly, he raised his head and, looking at me sternly, asked: "You write only on one side of the paper?" I explained the proceeding, customary among pupils of the Conservatoire, of letting the ink dry on one page while going on copying the next to save time. "But then," he went on, "you are a tremendous waster of paper"—*ein riesiger Papier-Verschwender!* It was said so simply that I could scarcely feel the sting of irony which might have been implied; satisfied as I was with my wasteful calligraphy rather than with what I knew was but a mere pupil's achievement, I took his rebuke as something characteristically German, akin to the typical *Hausfrau's* preoccupation with economy. But when I related the remark to Delibes, he just foamed. I had, right there and then, a realization of the utter incompatibility between two races, two cultures and traditions. For Brahms had also asked of me: "Does your teacher approve of your being so finicky?" and, summing up, apparently, his own attitude, he added: "All that is not so important, you know!" Brahms evidently referred to a certain overburdening with detail, to which in riper years I, myself, would have had to plead, "Guilty!"

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At this juncture, I should like to interrupt my narrative for the sake of some critical speculation, which, I hope, may not prove wholly irrelevant or unprofitable. The word *tüfteln* (seek, pick) used by Brahms, implied a criticism which, in one way, seemed strange in the mouth of him whom Paderewski once called "the cleverest among composers." How often does not Brahms himself, by sheer cleverness of workmanship, by ingenuity of detail, save a commonplace idea, a seemingly academic development, a conventional harmonic idiom! The Frenchmen, of course, complain: "There are so many formulas in the music of Brahms." On the other hand, not only Delibes, but also more modern French masters—César Franck, Chabrier, Fauré—in spite of differences in their aims and techniques, thoroughly approved what even Saint-Saëns accepted as *des recherches amusantes* (amusing researches), meaning ingenious and unusual harmonic contrivances.

The word *drôle* (funny) was then and, I suspect, still remains the highest praise that young musicians can bestow upon some happy "find" of a colleague. Strangely enough, therein we coincided with Master Brahms's own mode of expression, at least, no matter how far apart we may have been in meaning and application. Disdainful as he seemed to be of new or odd harmonic details, he did not condemn "amusement" in art, and this was reflected in his speech. I gleaned some characteristic expressions of his. *Ein sehr fleissiger Mann* (a very industrious man) he would call a certain prodigal composer in an evidently derisive sense. On the other hand, *lustig* (jolly) seemed in his mouth a familiar word of praise. But praise as well as criticism, for that matter, was brief and scant. If expressed at all, it was quite summary. As I learned from friends, it was a matter of principle with him that youth should not be excessively praised.

But these were mere ways of speech. Underneath, the attitude was definite and unmistakable. It simply meant Beethoven's "torment of unity" (as Romain Rolland has called it) turned into the generating principle of unswervingly logical construction. Compared with the essential requirements of this ideal—in the symphonic field, at any rate, since Brahms was the last of the great race of German symphonists—all concern for novelty of ideas, freedom of form, fastidiousness of detail, especially the prevalent sway of color over line, would seem futile or fallacious, should indeed be abandoned as harmful or disastrous.

At the same time, perhaps, this goes a long way toward explaining the persistent misunderstanding of Brahms in France, where he is generally considered a second-rate composer. Among French musicians of various shades and opposite aims, I have found a surprising consensus of opinion about Brahms. Civil strife, of course, is silenced in presence of the common enemy. I once crossed the English channel on the same boat with Saint-Saëns. We came to speak of Brahms. "Certain works of his I like," he said, "rather exceptionally, though, for the general spirit I dislike." This from one reared in the classical tradition, a devotee and defender of line in music and a brilliant exponent, at the organ and the piano, of Bach and Mozart respectively. "I know how well you understand Bach," Brahms had uttered on meeting Saint-Saëns. But about their own music nothing was then said by either of them. Vincent d'Indy, theoretically an expressionist, but much concerned about principles of construction, declares in his treatise on composition that: "One should respect, but can scarcely love Brahms." For the French are all primarily harmon-



ists, that is colorists, regardless of their individual divergences and propensities—the bird's plumage must be richly varied and brilliant, whatever the song! Their iridescent mosaics of tones do not proceed from the same principles which were inculcated into Brahms through the German tradition embodied in sound, word, and philosophy.

Psychologists, old and new, teach that "we are embedded in the ways of thought in which we were brought up." I would not over-simplify the issue by reducing it to any too easy formula. We can neither elude, nor presume to solve such perplexing riddles as the mystery of genius and the spirit of race. There is no need, however, to over-emphasize Brahms's essential Teutonism, as do some of his French critics. From that very angle his artistic physiognomy presents some curiously disconcerting traits. It is true and of high import that Brahms was a deep student and lover of German folk-song, German poetry and literature, history and politics. Reared and steeped in Germanic culture almost exclusively, he was deeply stirred, nevertheless, by Hungary with its rich musical folk-lore. He also enthusiastically responded to Italy's unique artistic appeal. With Sigmund Münz, a Viennese journalist and writer, I heard him learnedly discuss Grillparzer's plays and fondly refer to some common memories of Italy. Of me he asked whether my native Poland held anything comparable to the treasure-house of Hungarian folk-song. Like Schumann, he greatly admired Chopin and highly prized the few manuscripts of his which he possessed. But to an amazing degree and to the end of his life, this Northern German was obsessed by Hungary, haunted by its musical influences. The fact has, so far, not been sufficiently stressed, to my mind, by biographers and critics. Still less has it been explained in view of what Ernest Newman, rightly or wrongly, calls the race-fallacy.

But towards France and its culture the attitude of Brahms was scarcely receptive, if not altogether hostile. He saw a recital program of mine containing the Prelude and Fugue on the name of Bach: "You don't play that as authentic Bach, do you?" he exclaimed; "however, I suppose it's good enough Bach for Paris!" And he wound up: "It's a good piece of music all right, but nothing more." Robert Fischhoff, the Viennese pianist, told me that Brahms once upbraided him for playing "such stuff" as Fauré's piano-quartet. Intolerance, apparently, was reciprocal, but certainly not accidental. Cortot relates that Fauré, when Director of the Paris Conservatoire, once took him to task for giving some Brahms composition to his pupils. "I thought," was the shrewd

retort, "that as long as it existed in the Conservatoire Library, it was permissible to study it."

Quite obviously, the sensuous fancies, the sophistications of a Fauré or Debussy are of another vintage, rooted in different soil, on the opposite side of the Rhine. Between the two shores flows, geographically, the "sacred river" (*der heilige Strom*), hiding in its depth the fabled Rhinegold and the fairy-maidens. Psychologically, it seems an almost unbridgeable gulf. It would be a pity, a great loss to humanity, if the different growths on either shore were ever suppressed or injured, whether it be the mighty oaks and green ferns of the primeval Nibelungen forest, or the flowerbeds, the formal hedges and marble fountains of Versailles. Will humanity ever outgrow the aggressive warfare of ideas?

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I cannot refrain from relating here a tale, not my own, but one I hold at first hand; to my knowledge, it has never yet appeared in print. It is illustrative of temperamental differences between men, leading to conscious manifestations of adverse opinion, yet pointing to a hopeful moral. I heard from Tchaikovsky's own lips of his acquaintance with Brahms. Tchaikovsky had travelled direct from Moscow to Hamburg, where he was to conduct one of his symphonies. Tired from the long journey, he could not rest at the hotel, where a troublesome neighbor kept coughing noisily and pacing the floor at night. Early in the morning, Tchaikovsky rang the bell and demanded to change quarters, as he was badly in need of rest before the next day's concert. The hotel clerk assured him this was unnecessary, as he had heard the neighbor say that he would leave after the morning's rehearsal. That rehearsal being Tchaikovsky's own, he inquired about the neighbor's name. The reply was: "It is a Mr. Brahms from Vienna."

At the rehearsal the two met for the first time. Brahms was amiable, even cordial. He asked Tchaikovsky to lunch, and during it he entertained him with stories. No word was spoken about music until black coffee was served at the end of a hearty meal. No prohibitionist, Brahms, as was his wont, mixed his coffee with some liqueur. He then grew more expansive and asked: "Would you now like to have my opinion of your symphony?" He added the warning: "But, you know, I am an honest man and can say only what I think." Upon Tchaikovsky's equally honest and eager acquiescence, Brahms calmly proceeded to a sharply derog-

atory critique of subject-matter, form, orchestration and what not. On top of it all, he asked: "I hope I did not hurt you?" Tchaikovsky's comment to me was that he would have been deeply hurt had he not, himself, frankly hated the Brahms symphonies! But ever since, he kept a high esteem for Brahms, the honest and straightforward man. As to Tchaikovsky's reaction to Brahms's music, the reader may be reminded of his now published letters. One of these, I remember, defines it as "pedestal piled upon pedestal, while the statue is never forthcoming." Brahms, nevertheless, retained a sympathetic respect for Tchaikovsky, whatever faults he may have found with the Russian's music. I had occasion to report to Brahms that Tchaikovsky had been so badly treated at rehearsals by the orchestra at the Vienna Music Exhibition, that he left town before the concert. "I am very sorry," Brahms repeatedly uttered with evident concern.

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When I saw Brahms in Vienna, returned from his vacation, it so happened that Bülow had placed upon his program for the Hamburg Philharmonic season my first orchestral Suite, Op. 9. Brahms knew of this and mentioned it, which led to my request that he permit me to show him the work. Once more, he plunged, silently absorbed, into reading my manuscript score. But this time it seemed rather different. Perhaps the composition was more mature, or he was in a more lenient mood, more favorably disposed by better acquaintance, or rather by Bülow's opinion which he valued. The epithet *lustig* was then liberally applied. Yet, my French schooling and the consequent preoccupation with color still prompted the exclamation: "For you, evidently, the history of the world begins with Berlioz!" Upon my candid assertion that I was scarcely familiar with Berlioz's scores, he replied: "It may also work indirectly." Then again an outcry: *Donnerwetter! Sie instrumentieren aber raffiniert!* (By Jove! you do orchestrate with finesse!) This was followed, somewhat peevishly, by the remark: "Of course, our orchestras do relish such daring and difficult things, whereas, if anyone comes along with some old-fashioned symphony, they turn up their noses."

After these many years, the outstanding impression of that interview with Brahms remains that of his utter simplicity. There was no pose or condescension on his part. The aspiring young composer was treated fraternally, I would almost say as an equal, were it not that the mere phrase has an immodest ring. I was

allowed to talk shop freely. At one point, where I had entrusted the melody to the woodwinds alone, against a counterpoint given to the strings in unison, Brahms turned to me, wondering: "Do the winds (*die Bläser*) suffice here?" With conviction I gave an affirmative reply. This emboldened me to ask a question in turn, about some scheme of divided violins about which I felt a little doubtful. He glanced at the score, reflected a moment, and finally burst out: "I don't know that either."

It was in the Vienna Stadtpark that I saw him last. Bad tongues—he made enemies as well as friends—insinuated that he was play-acting as Beethoven's successor to the point of duplicating the Titan's devious ways, frequenting little out-of-the-way restaurants. In truth, he did not stroll for hours in the countryside after the midday meal, but on his way back from the "Rote Igel" or "Kochschule" he would stop at the Casino in the Stadtpark for relaxation. There I found him, with Dr. Münz, seated at a little marble table on the high terrace, sipping his coffee seasoned with a glass of cognac and eagerly reading the daily papers fixed on a stick, Viennese fashion. After the reading was concluded, and an involuntary brief "siesta" indulged in, I requested the privilege of accompanying him home across the park. We walked through the winding alleys towards the beautiful Karlskirche, in back of which he lived, in a truly Italian corner of the Austrian capital, peaceably happy in quaint surroundings which evoked cherished memories of a sun-kissed and art-blessed land. We came to a circle in the park where some children played. Brahms stopped and watched a while, interested and smiling. Then he bent down and stretched out his hand which some little ones, smiling in turn, eagerly grasped. *So ist schön* (That is fine) the solitary great man exclaimed with genuine radiance in his kind blue eyes. A few steps more, a few minutes later, and he had disappeared under a high vault, behind the old church.

## BRAHMS, CHORAL CONDUCTOR

By MARIA KOMORN

**M**OST great composers find themselves obliged to combine some form of practical activity with their creative work in order to earn a living. Like Bach, who rebelled at the old custom requiring him, so far as possible, to "walk with and beside the boys<sup>1</sup> in all funeral processions," many regard such a life as distasteful and degrading; others derive so much satisfaction from it, quite aside from its necessity, and in some cases consider it so well worth striving after, that they do their utmost to obtain official posts as conductors and teachers. And to a certain extent we can readily understand why the voice of instinct, warning them of the dangers of a professional career, is disregarded. The actual making of music is stimulating in the highest degree to the composer and intimately connected in a variety of ways with his work.

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Brahms is no exception to this general rule. As a young man he served, gladly and devotedly, as conductor to women's choruses in Hamburg as well as in Detmold, where he began in 1857 to arrange German folk-songs for his singers, faithful to an early love that never left him. Then, in 1863, came the invitation to take over the direction of the choral concerts of the Singakademie in Vienna. Piqued by the preference that had just been shown to another applicant for a position as conductor in his native Hamburg, Brahms accepted the Viennese offer joyfully. From the beginning his scrupulously exact and ceremonious inquiries regarding rehearsals, programs, and honorarium betray the inner conflict between the composer and the professional conductor. "One makes an important decision," he says, "when one surrenders one's freedom for the first time."

Work began, and before long the chorus recognized the superior leader in Brahms and placed itself squarely behind him. The first program, an extremely bold beginning for the superficial taste of those days, included Bach's cantata "I ponder in great heaviness," Schumann's "Requiem for Mignon," Beethoven's

<sup>1</sup>The reference is to his choir-boys at the Thomasschule in Leipzig.

"Song of Offering," and—as if in confession of faith—three German folk-songs. A fourth acknowledged the storm of applause that followed. Concessions to public taste, no matter how slight, were scarcely expected of Brahms in the choice of later programs, and the second concert, which took place at the beginning of the carnival of 1864, was entirely given over to such sombre pieces as Bach's cantata "Dearest Lord, when wilt thou summon?," Beethoven's "Elegiac Song," and Mendelssohn's motet "In the midst of life we are in death." The audience groaned. Biting, sarcastic comment was heard on every hand. "When Brahms is really cheerful," wittily observed the poet Mosenthal, "he sings 'The grave is my solace.'" The chorus, disquieted too by technical mishaps, began to lose heart. Allowances ought also to be made for the wretched financial situation of such choral societies as this one, unable to pay an orchestra and forced, as a rule, to sing a *cappella* or with the accompaniment of the piano alone; for the formidable competition of the more adequately supported Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde under Herbeck; and for the tremendous loss of time incurred in preparing works for which no serviceable parts could be obtained and which Brahms had accordingly to arrange himself. Under these adverse conditions, in short, the young conductor soon had enough and refused reappointment to the position he had taken up a year before with all the fire of genius and zest of youth. The rule that those with real capacity for creative work are generally incapable of holding a permanent position was exemplified in his career for the first time. Yet Brahms had been extraordinarily popular with the members of his chorus, and it is noteworthy that his great virtues as a conductor were recognized at the time by the Viennese press. Later these same virtues were seriously questioned, and perhaps not quite improperly.

About 1870, when Brahms had already become famous as a composer, the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde in Vienna approached him for the first time with the request that he take over the direction of a part of their concerts. For administrative reasons he declined. On November 16, 1871, however, at a meeting of the Society's directors, his appointment was again proposed. Wagner's friend Dr. Standhardtner conducted the negotiations and was soon in a position to report that he had found Brahms favorably disposed toward the special concerts, for which he asked 2,000 Gulden, with an additional guarantee of 1,000. This demand and the requested three-months notice clause were approved at once,



for Brahms's engagement as conductor, under any conditions, was regarded as a matter of supreme importance.

From the psychological point of view, Brahms's contradictory attitude, when faced with this offer, is most interesting, revealing as it does the conflict between his vanity as conductor and his secret fear as composer. In May, 1869, he writes to Hermann Deiters: "Frankly, I should very much enjoy the continuous association with chorus and orchestra, but acceptance does not seem to me permissible." In June, 1870, to Max Bruch: "Confidentially, I may add that I am indeed being considered here (for Herbeck's place). But the position involves a variety of highly debatable questions, and I would almost prefer that people would spare themselves the official offer and me the difficult decision." And in October, 1871, to Hermann Levi: "The direction of the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde is now being offered to me for the third time,<sup>2</sup> and I have as good as definitely accepted. Indeed, I am unable to avoid doing so, for every difficulty I make is adjusted according to my wishes. . . . Unless some hamlet or other offers me a position, I shall not know how to escape."

And Levi, the devoted disciple and faithful friend who knew and understood Brahms as few others did, Levi warns Brahms against the conductor's post with prophetic emphasis:

Like all human activity, a professional career demands undivided attention and may not . . . be taken care of in spare time. But—in my humble opinion, as always—for you to devote more than spare time to any task but that of writing music would be a mistake. . . . You are not the man to carry through to victory the battle with the thousand petty annoyances that every public position inevitably involves. . . . I keenly appreciate your desire for real security and for a life that will not be subject to the mood and inspiration of the moment; material arguments, too, have their appeal. But far above all this is your duty: to persevere in your fight, not to shift the emphasis of your life to a field that can be cultivated successfully by underlings, but not by masters.

Brahms must have realized that his friend was right and that time would prove him so. Yet, for all his disagreeable experiences in the Singakademie, he accepted. The attractions of a general's commission were too strong for him. What is more, the position was much sought after, at home and abroad, a circumstance which may have tempted him sorely. Not long ago I chanced to discover a letter from Brahms's friend, the conductor and composer Friedrich Gernsheim (1839-1916), to a prominent citizen of Vienna, in which Gernsheim writes, on April 18, 1871:

I have just learned that Director Hellmesberger has resigned his position with the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde and that negotiations

<sup>2</sup>The first offers had been informal, through semi-official channels.

with Brahms regarding acceptance of the same are already under way. . . . *In case these negotiations with Brahms lead to nothing*, you will oblige me by keeping me in mind and exerting your influence in my behalf. I should be very happy to transfer my sphere of activity to Vienna and to become the leader of a society whose importance in the musical world is so great. . . . It is presumably superfluous to ask you to regard this letter as confidential so long as the outcome of the negotiations with Brahms remains in suspense.

But once rehearsals began in the fall of 1872, the joy of actual work with so excellent a body of singers overcame all Brahms's scruples, and after his first chilly reception the new conductor, now rich in experience, quickly established himself with the chorus. "Brahms understands perfectly how to work out details," we read in the minutes of the Society. "The members are very industrious and obviously interested. . . . Brahms's distinguished technical prowess is generally acknowledged." A new spirit took possession of the chorus, and demands for thorough, intensive study and uncompromising insistence on the highest possible standards met with immediate response. The more the conductor asked, the more he received. His singers appreciated the practical expediency of his methods and agreed to a second weekly rehearsal; to please him, the ladies practised difficult passages, six at a time—patiently and without resentment, though no conductor before Brahms had dared to require it of them. Yet Brahms was by no means lavish with his praises. He never flattered his singers, and for this reason they were doubly gratified with his scant recognition. And he had another way of rewarding good work that compensated for his brusque reserve: when the members of the chorus had particularly distinguished themselves he played for them on the piano after the rehearsal, winning their hearts with improvised fantasies on themes from the music just practised.

Very little information regarding Brahms's conducting has come down to us, unfortunately, so that it is extremely difficult to determine precisely how he worked and what his special qualities were. The following details I owe to Frau Therese Gugler, one of the few surviving members of Brahms's chorus from the time of his directorship at the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde. Since Brahms's capacity for conducting has been openly questioned, particularly by the press, these entirely trustworthy reminiscences of an actual member of his chorus are the more deserving of attention. When I interviewed her in connection with the preliminary studies for my book,<sup>3</sup> this remarkable old lady, surpris-

<sup>3</sup>Johannes Brahms als Chordirigent in Wien und seine Nachfolger, Vienna: Universal Edition, 1928.



Snapshot taken by Eugen Miller von Aichholz

From left to right: Privy Councillor Wendt, Viktor von Miller-Aichholz, Prof. Koessler (in the rear) Arthur Nikisch (in the foreground), Prof. Julius Epstein, Fräulein Olga von Miller-Aichholz, Brahms, Frau Nikisch, Frau Olga von Miller-Aichholz, and Fräulein Henriette Hemala



Brahms in 1891

Charcoal sketch, drawn from life by Ludwig Michalek

Brahms, according to his own statement, sat for no portrait-artist other than Michalek and the sculptor, Viktor Tilgner



ingly active for her eighty-six years and gifted with an unusually retentive memory, still had all the entrances in the standard choral works clearly in mind. Brahms was always business-like in rehearsals, she told me, *yet at the same time kindly and patient, never rude or coarse*.<sup>4</sup> The singers enjoyed working under him and from the first were firmly convinced that their youthful leader was a great man, no every-day chorus director, although the blonde, clean-shaven Brahms of those days, while already a celebrity, had but crossed the threshold of his later career. With all their respect for Brahms the members of his chorus stood on terms of Viennese familiarity with him.

In looking over Brahms's scores in the archives of the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde, I was astonished to find that in works by Bach, for example, he had provided, bar for bar, the most precise indications for expression and phrasing. Brahms had the singers read through the music first, Frau Gugler told me, and concentrated for a time on fundamentals, almost *al fresco*, before turning to the working-out of rhythmic and dynamic detail. Other conductors have also used this method, to be sure, but its employment is by no means universal. The number of rehearsals required for the completely successful first concert on November 10, 1872, corresponded roughly to that usual today. When it is recalled that in 1842 Otto Nicolai held thirteen rehearsals for a performance of Beethoven's "Ninth" at a Philharmonic concert, Brahms's time-saving rehearsal-technic appears in the light of an important step forward.

Though the character and influence of Brahms's activities as conductor may be variously appraised by unprejudiced and sympathetic musicians and music-lovers, there is one point on which there can be no disagreement: Brahms's leadership was distinguished and enormously stimulating. The significant, progressive side of his work lies, however, in his programs. They constitute an immutable landmark, a monument to responsibility in the cultivation of art. Little attention has been paid them until now, but the standards they established are still in force. Though we discount the practice, then current, of presenting occasional miscellaneous programs, in the case of Brahms we admire, even in these, a cultivated taste and flair for style inconceivable in anyone but a creative artist, for whom unswerving veracity and genuine conviction outweigh concern for personal success and external effect.

<sup>4</sup>Another member of the chorus then living in Windischgarsten, Frau Hilda Svetlin, bore out Frau Gugler on this last point.

An outstanding characteristic of the Brahms program is the interpolation of the colorful, yet impersonal folk-song, which adapts itself so readily to its momentary artistic surroundings. How masterly the arrangement of the very first program is: after Handel's Dettingen *Te Deum* follows an aria by Mozart, related in style, then the satisfying wedge of old folk-song—Eccard's "Über's Gebirg Maria geht" and Isaac's "Innsbruck, ich muss dich lassen"—as a transition to Schubert—the C major Symphony arranged for orchestra by Joachim after the Grand Duo for piano, four hands, Op. 140. Such a program has organic design, inwardly and outwardly, and I can imagine no surer or less perceptible bridge between Handel and Schubert than the old, artistically arranged folk-songs. Another instance of exemplary program-building: Brahms begins with an overture and an aria by Schubert, following them with a concert-piece for piano and orchestra by Volkmann, a contemporary whose style resembles Schubert's in many respects. The program closes with Beethoven's Choral Fantasy. And how does Brahms avoid glaring contrast in going from straightforward innocence to crowning monumentality? He turns to the old masters of the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries, choosing little choruses by Ahle, Bach, and Gallus, among them the short, but joyously animated and firmly welded Bach cantata "Now hath the grace and the strength." The Choral Fantasy can follow now without creating in anyone the impression that an abrupt transition has been made. Almost all of Brahms's other programs display this same sensitivity to style, this same logical arrangement.

Among the works filling a whole evening, those of Handel occupy first place, and one of the benefits Brahms conferred on Vienna was his first performance of Handel's *Saul*, an event of importance in those days, when Handel's music was as good as unknown to the larger public. And forty-six years after Schubert's death, Brahms fulfilled an obligation to a brother composer by bringing out works of his that had lain forgotten until that time—the Kyrie and Credo from the Mass in A-flat. The emphasis in Brahms's programs is first on Bach, then on Schubert, Schumann, and Mendelssohn; among his own works, the first performance of the *Triumphlied* and an incomparable reading of the *German Requiem* are memorable. Quality was the sole consideration dictating the selection and performance of contemporary music. And what is particularly noteworthy, Brahms knew the capacities and limitations of his hearers: his programs were never inordinately long, indeed, their proportions were given the most careful consideration.



It goes without saying that the creative urge in Brahms impelled him to undertake the arrangement of most of the works he performed and that he devoted to this task much time that rightfully belonged to composition. A distinguished Viennese musician informed me, indeed, that the arrangement of the Matthew Passion alone occupied Brahms for three months. Yet for all his self-effacement in the interests of the ideal program, Brahms was unable to maintain this way of working. The time for such programs was not yet ripe. The events of 1864 repeated themselves; as in the Singakademie, the seriousness of his programs provoked grumbling and dissatisfaction in the public, in the press, and even in the chorus. The directors of the Society were not precisely predisposed in their conductor's favor when the time came for planning the coming seasons' programs, and Brahms, lost in the naïve, unworldly detachment of the creative musician, sat composing on the Starnbergersee, where he was only located with the greatest difficulty. The terrific economic crisis of 1873 accentuated all this discontent, created new impediments, and forced Brahms, at last, to a recognition of the bitter truth of Levi's warning. "It is for conducting and for dealing with dilettantes that we underlings are here," Levi had written; "Be satisfied with a year." Time had proved him right. At the close of his third season Brahms resigned, not without regret. The lasting influence of his connection with the Society's concerts still persists.

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What Brahms fought for sixty years ago is accepted today without question. The concerts he conducted then have long been committed to the serious, ideal program. No subscriber of our day would countenance a return to the insipid, dilettantish, superficial *program-mosaic* that Brahms did away with; there have been attempts to revive it since his time, but they have been unsuccessful. What finer contribution could genius have made than the prophetic breaking of a new path? It remains for Wilhelm Furtwängler and Robert Heger, the musicians who control the present destinies of the Society's concerts, to administer Brahms's artistic legacy, to develop it, and to adapt it to the needs of our time. The enduring force of his example justifies the means he used and illustrates the after-influence of the creative spirit.

(Translated by W. Oliver Strunk.)

## BRAHMS AS A READER AND COLLECTOR

By KARL GEIRINGER

RARELY has the honorary title of Doctor of Philosophy been bestowed upon an artist with such well-founded justification as in the case of Johannes Brahms. When in 1879 the University of Breslau named him *doctor honoris causa*, it was for the great composer that the distinction was intended. The faculty probably did not know that they were simultaneously conferring the honor upon a man who was also entitled to it through the exceptional breadth and profundity of his culture. For Brahms, whose regular schooling had ceased in his fifteenth year, strove from his earliest youth with uncommon fervor to deepen and extend his knowledge. By his thirst for information and his never-flagging industry, this son of a poor musician became an authority esteemed not only by fellow artists but among men of science as well. It was no mere chance that Brahms's circle of friends and acquaintances included scholars like Spitta, Nottebohm, Pohl, Chrysander, Jahn, and Mandyczewski, the music historians, Wendt the philologist, and the famous physicians, Billroth and Engelmann.

Already in his early years this hunger for knowledge manifested itself. As a schoolboy Brahms always used his pocket-money for a subscription to the circulating library; and when, as a youth, he played dance-music in little pubs and pothouses, he would set a book before him on the music-rack, eagerly reading while his fingers mechanically performed the long-familiar tunes. He made diligent use of the library of his teacher, Marxsen. Here for the first time he had the run of a valuable and well-ordered collection of books and music which he studied with the greatest care, copying out in full anything—such as Beethoven symphonies—that particularly interested him. Later on he ransacked the Schumanns' library, as he himself wrote, with great delight (*mit grosser Wonne*); and he only too gladly undertook the task of arranging its books and music, in order to become acquainted in the process with their contents. During his summer visits to Thun, in 1886-88, he would wander over to his friend Widmann in Bern with a large leather travelling-bag in which to abduct as many books as possible from the house of that widely cultured writer. In the last years of his life, too, he was a frequent visitor

to public libraries. Time and again, in Hamburg, Einsiedeln, Berlin, Vienna, and other cities, he read, worked, or copied whatever particularly enthralled him.

In view of the excellent education he thus achieved, it is not surprising that Brahms now and again put through some piece of work that had no direct connection with his own creative activity: the preparation, for instance, in association with Chrysander, of the edition of Couperin's piano works; the arranging of Handel duets; together with the reverent editing of Schumann's works and the revision of Mozart's "Requiem" in which he so acutely distinguished between the composer's intent and Suessmayer's additions—these last for the two complete critical editions. Typical of the wide knowledge Brahms gradually acquired in the field of musicology is his attitude on the question of the authenticity of the supposed Bach "Passion according to Saint Luke." Although the work appeared to be in Bach's own hand, Brahms quite definitely denied the genuineness of the authorship, thus setting himself in opposition to the view of Philipp Spitta, the foremost Bach authority. Today Brahms's standpoint is pretty generally accepted by investigators.

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Brahms's interest and learning come to a focus, as it were, in his own collections. His books, his music, his pictures are like bits of himself. But although he had a passion, deep-rooted and perhaps inherited from a paternal relative, for acquiring musical and literary works, ancient and modern, collecting was for him always a means, never an end. Nothing that failed to advance or enrich his experience did he consider worth keeping. Of the endless amount that Brahms heard, read, and saw in the course of his life, he desired to possess comparatively little; thus these collections of his—most of their contents conveyed by his last will to the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde in Vienna<sup>1</sup>—enable us to look deep into his mental life.

True child of his time, in the field of belles-lettres Brahms first learned to know the romantic poetry of the Germans; witnesses to which youthful inclination are the works we find in his library of Eichendorff, Arnim, Novalis, Hölderlin, Mörike, and especially his favorite poets, Jean Paul Richter and E. T. A. Hoffmann. Of romantic origin also is Brahms's strong predilection for folk-art.

<sup>1</sup>Cf. Eusebius Mandyczewski, "Die Bibliothek Brahms," in "Musikbuch aus Österreich," Vienna, 1904.

From that sturdy collection of sayings, "Wie das Volk spricht," and a particularly rich assemblage of old German popular books ("Die schöne Magelone," "Dr. Faust," "Siegfried," etc.), to the great folk-song collections of Herder, Arnim-Brentano ("Des Knaben Wunderhorn"), the Edda, old English, Scottish, and Danish ballads, and the folk-song collections, with music, of Erk-Böhme, Kretschmer-Zuccalmaglio, Arnold, there is here an abundance of works of popular art from a great variety of nations. Classic literature Brahms experienced later, though in hardly less quantity, than the romantic. Besides works of the "storm and stress" period, Herder, Lessing, Goethe, Schiller are fully represented in his collection. He possessed in addition a copy, read almost to pieces, of the Schiller-Goethe letters, as well, of course, as Goethe's correspondence with Zelter. Of the older German poets there are, among others, the works of Gottfried of Strassburg and Goedecke's anthology of 16th-century verse.

Brahms was anything but a linguist. Various well-worn French and Italian grammars in his library bear witness to his strenuous efforts to master those languages. Nor did the Italian translations of German classics, presented to him (after their journey to Italy together) by his friend Billroth in the hope of inducting Brahms pleasantly and easily into the secrets of the foreign tongue, achieve their purpose. Brahms's disinclination to desert German-speaking territory (the trip to Italy excepted),<sup>2</sup> and more particularly his opposition to receiving the honorary doctor's degree from Cambridge, were doubtless connected with this weakness. Yet in spite of it he took the greatest interest in world literature; only he read good translations instead of the originals. The ancient classics are represented by the works of Æschylus, Apuleius, Catullus, Herodotus, Homer, Ovid, Plautus, Plutarch, Sophocles; Romance literature by Boccaccio, Cervantes, Dante, Gozzi, Ariosto, Camoens, Lesage, and Molière; English, by Shakespeare, Buckle, Byron, Emerson, Thomas Moore, and Sterne.

Just as he especially delighted in the literature of bygone days, so also he read history with particular pleasure: Sybel's seven-volume "Founding of the German Empire," Häusser's four-volume "German History," and Müller's three-volume "General History of Mankind." The history of civilization, and more especially of art, were pet subjects, and in these fields he possessed

<sup>2</sup>It was very characteristic of Brahms that he never undertook a journey without first carefully providing himself with guide-books. He cared nothing for naïve, simply sensuous enjoyment without the use of the understanding, and so we find in his library a considerable number of Baedekers and other handbooks of travel.

the best works of his time: Grimm's "Life of Michelangelo," Burckhardt's "Culture of the Renaissance" and "Cicerone," Lübke's "History of Architecture" and "History of the Renaissance in France," Wölfflin's "Renaissance and Baroque." He had a particular liking for the pictures of the spirited genre-painter Chodowiecki, whose wealth of not altogether spontaneous inspiration enchanted him: the presence in Brahms's library of a quantity of the daintiest little almanacs is due merely to their being illustrated with a few Chodowiecki etchings. Some indications of Brahms's connection with the artists of his own day are also to be found: Feuerbach's "Legacy" and Allgeyer's Feuerbach biography, Menzel's illustrations to the works of Frederick the Great, and Klinger's "Amor and Psyche" etchings, dedicated to Brahms, as well as his "Brahms-Fantasies."

Brahms was not one of those artists who close their eyes to the important events of their own time. He followed political developments in Germany with lively concern, so that it is not surprising to find in his library Bismarck's letters, books on the War of 1870, Treitschke's "Historical and Political Essays," Exner's "On Politics," and other volumes of the sort. Through his friends Billroth and Engelmann he even came in touch with the medical profession, which explains the presence also of the former's "Surgical Letters" and the latter's "Experiments on the Microscopic Changes in Muscle-Contraction."

In contrast to so much serious matter in this varied collection of books, light and humorous literature is also represented. Brahms owned more than twenty volumes of the satirical sheet "Kladderadatsch," a short anthology of Wilhelm Busch, the popular humorist, and not only the published farces by Nestroy, the famous Viennese poet-actor, but a manuscript copy of his notorious "Judith and Holofernes" (a travesty on Hebbel's "Judith"), upon the title-page of which it is proudly noted that the passages suppressed by the censor are here included.

Brahms's music books are naturally of particular interest to us. First and foremost there are the older theoretical works of Adlung, Forkel, Fux, Gerber, Hiller, Marpurg, Mattheson, Walter, and the rest, which Brahms began assembling as a very young man. Then came the great musicological and critical works of his own contemporaries which we should the more expect to find since—as we have already seen—Brahms was on friendly terms, or at least acquainted, with most of the authors. Jahn's "Mozart," Chrysander's "Händel," Spitta's "Bach," and Pohl's "Haydn"; Nottebohm's "Beethoveniana" and thematic catalogs

of Schubert and Beethoven, Köchel's Mozart catalog, Dommer's "Dictionary" and "History of Music," and Hanslick's critical writings. It is quite typical of Brahms, on the other hand, that he did not want to own a book like Wasielewski's biography of Schumann. It must have been repugnant to him to see the life, thoughts, and feelings of a man so close to him both humanly and artistically, pictured in every detail; the more since he had no high regard for the author as a person. We see here also an expression of Brahms's dread of publicity and of every sort of indiscretion.

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The quantity of music Brahms collected is immense. Its foundation-stones are full sets of the complete editions of Bach, Handel, Schütz, Chopin, Schumann, and Mendelssohn, to which were added a number of magnificent first editions of works of John Sebastian and Carl Philip Emanuel Bach, Domenico Scarlatti, and Gluck. Scarcely to be counted are the works of Mozart, Haydn, Beethoven, and Schubert that Brahms possessed, some of them also in valuable first editions. So numerous were these—especially in the cases of Beethoven and Mozart—that he suffered no loss in not acquiring the monumental complete editions of these composers. Brahms was particularly fond of the dainty little pocket chamber-music scores published by Heckel in Mannheim, which had been given him by Clara Schumann and Joseph Joachim; numerous marginal notes in his own hand show how carefully he used them. Among his contemporaries, his friends are naturally very well represented. But the presence in his library of compositions of Joachim, Herzogenberg, Dvořák, Bruch, Goldmark, Reintaler, Grädener, has in a way less to do with Brahms's musical convictions than with the circumstances of his life. This is particularly true as regards the examples he possessed of Rubinstein, Liszt and Wagner. There is an odd tale in connection with a "Rheingold" score bearing a dedication in Wagner's hand: *Herrn Johannes Brahms als wohlkonditionierter Ersatz für ein garstiges Manuskript, Bayreuth 27. Juni 1875, Richard Wagner* [To Mr. Johannes Brahms as substitute in good condition for a rotten manuscript . . .]. Brahms had acquired through Cornelius the original manuscript of the Paris version of the Venusberg scene from "Tannhäuser"; but Wagner later declared that he had only



loaned, not given, it to Cornelius and demanded that Brahms give it back. A somewhat irritated correspondence ensued which led finally to an exchange: Brahms gave the manuscript back and received in its stead the "Rheingold" score with Wagner's inscription.<sup>3</sup>

Unquestionably the most precious part of Brahms's collection is its autographs. The jewel among these is the score of Mozart's great G minor Symphony which Brahms received from the Landgravine Anna of Hesse as a token of thanks for the dedication of his Piano Quintet. Of particular value also are the daintily penned scores of Haydn's six "Sonnenquartette" [Op. 20], and the unique document of two sheets the first of which bears Beethoven's song "Ich liebe dich so wie du mich" and the rest a Schubert Andante for piano in D minor (later transposed to G minor and used in the E-flat major piano sonata), and upon which Brahms has immortalized himself as third in this great company. There are several Beethoven and Schubert autographs besides. Brahms owned more than 60 sheets of Beethoven sketches, and 5 with composition exercises, besides various transcripts (among them the "Missa Solemnis") and proof-sheets with notes in the master's own hand. Of original Schubert manuscripts he possessed a number of songs, among them the "Wanderer," several fragments and sketches, and 24 pages with various dances. Schuman, thanks to the intimate friendship of Brahms with himself and his wife, is also represented by larger works, such as the first version of the D minor Symphony, the Overture to Schiller's "Bride of Messina," the orchestral suite "Overture, Scherzo and Finale," the "Davidsbündler" dances, and others. Brahms also naturally owned a number of his friend Joachim's larger works, such as the overtures to "Hamlet," "Henry IV," "Demetrius," etc. Among smaller compositions of other masters there are Berlioz' "La mort d'Ophélie," Chopin's E minor Mazurka and A-flat major Prelude, Mendelssohn's motet "In the midst of life we are in death," the closing scene of Johann Strauss's "Ritter Pazman," and the concert ending of Wagner's prelude to "Tristan und Isolde." Last but not least, the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde has been the recipient of 40 of Brahms's own manuscripts from his library, among them the "Liebeslieder" waltzes, the C minor Piano Trio, the Double Concerto, the G major Viola

<sup>3</sup>Fourteen of the sixteen curious holograph letters of Richard Wagner addressed to the milliner Bertha Goldwag in Vienna (published in 1877 by Daniel Spitzer in the *Vienna Neue Freie Presse*), which were presented to Brahms (!) by a friend (who had bought them from Spitzer), are now in the Library of Congress at Washington.—Ed.

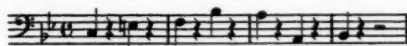
Quintet, the Clarinet Quintet, and others. The "Deutsches Requiem" Brahms had already given over to the society in 1893.

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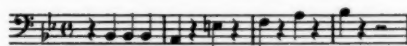
Our survey of Brahms's collection would not be complete without mention of the copies Brahms made for himself of much music and of many excerpts from books. We know that poems he liked and that seemed particularly suitable for setting to music he used to copy into a book whence—often long afterwards—he drew upon them for song-texts. Similarly he used to copy off—with a patience and conscientiousness reminiscent of great composers of earlier days—compositions that seemed to him worthy of note, whenever necessary making up the score from the separate parts. He had one note-book with manuscript copies of canons by Caldara, Cherubini, Haydn, Mozart, and others. In this wise, too, he provided himself with copies of the somewhat lengthy Easter-cantata "Lazarus" and other works of Schubert. Indeed, the older composers thus represented in his library are bewilderingly numerous. And it is only natural that there should also be a great many transcripts of folk-songs in this interesting part of Brahms's library.

But his collections deserve our interest not only for the variety of their contents but also for the fact that Brahms undertook to make on the pages of these volumes extensive notes that give us delightful little glimpses into the nature and the idiosyncrasies of the man. He was, first and foremost, a highly conscientious reader. Typographical errors and mistakes in grammar he always corrected, or at least drew attention to by a pencil-mark in the margin. With scholarly care he would compare the modern editions of the classics with the best sources—autographs and first editions—in order minutely to note any differences or errors he might find in the copy he would himself make use of. To pick but one example: he meticulously compared the Heckel scores of Haydn's 12 Quartets, Op. 17 and 33, with the original manuscripts. The number of variations he observed and conscientiously entered in his copy with the note "according to the MS.," is uncommonly large. How trenchant many of the changes are the following example from the Adagio of Op. 17, No. 2, will show. In the

Heckel score, which Brahms used, the 'cello part in measures 29-32 reads:



which Brahms corrected from the autograph to:



Even some of the newer editions have failed to incorporate these and similar corrections which Brahms made almost 70 years ago.<sup>4</sup>

Of importance is an error he found in the first movement of Beethoven's second violin sonata. In almost all the 19th-century editions, including the Breitkopf & Härtel critical complete edition, the violin part in measures 216-220 reads:



Brahms, fortunate possessor of the first edition of this work, published by Artaria & Co. in Vienna in 1799, by comparison of this with the later editions, set right the wide-spread error by altering the violin-part to:



whereby, furthermore, the disturbing parallel fifths between the violin and piano parts in measure 218 are avoided. Not until long after Brahms's death was this important correction taken into consideration in new editions of the sonata.

To follow up all the variations and mistakes that Brahms established by his truly devoted investigation of such comparisons would constitute no mean task in itself. Naturally he painstakingly hunted for the errors in the printed editions of his own works. He kept corrected proofs of all his compositions, and these provided the most important basis for the recent critical edition of his complete works.

He had a passion for hunting out parallel fifths and octaves in the works of the classical composers. Whatever his keen critical

<sup>4</sup>The Peters two-volume edition (parts) of the 83 quartets contains this correction; also the Eulenburg (Payne) score. [*Translator's Note.*]

eyes espied, he scrupulously registered for purposes of study. Here are a few out of the many scores of examples he so noted:

Bach, St. Matthew Passion  
No. 8, Recitative, measure 10



Bach, Cantata No. 59  
Duet, measure 41



Beethoven, String Quartet in  
C# minor, op. 131, Allegro,  
measures 171-172



Schubert, Müllerlieder  
No. 17, measure 20



Mendelssohn, Midsummer Night's Dream,  
Marcia Funebre, measures 15-16



Schumann, Romanze,  
op. 28, No. 1, measures 15-16



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Yet all this conscientiousness in Brahms's reading did not ill accord, as might have been the case, with the sudden outbursts of a lively temperament manifested by frequent marginal entries in the books in his library. At one point in the "Butterflies" of Spitteler, the Swiss poet he so much admired, he wrote "Beautiful" (*Schön*). On the other hand, at a sugary passage in Suess's "Progress of Mankind" he says: "a better example might have been chosen. Sentimental!" (*hätte wohl etwas Besseres als Beispiel gewählt werden können. Sentimental!*) As a youth—quite in the Romantic spirit—he had copied off passages that particularly appealed to him into a note-book destined for that purpose alone. This commonplace-book, together with the "Fine Thoughts about Music," was published in 1909 by the German Brahms Society.

We need not discuss here these charming anthologies, so typical of the youthful Brahms, since they have been fully discussed in Max Kalbeck's biography. In riper years Brahms lacked the leisure to carry on these time-consuming quotations; but the necessity also fell away, for from now on his material situation was such that he could afford to acquire any books that appealed to him for his library. He now adopted the simpler method of marking the passages that pleased him. There is an immense number of these highly characteristic underscorings.

I can naturally give but a few examples here. In Arnim's "Raphael and his Women Neighbors" Brahms underlines: "The artist must limit himself in order not to dissipate his efforts" (*Der Künstler muss sich beschränken um nicht zerstreut zu werden*). Equally expressive of the highly self-disciplined, conscientiously diligent Brahms is the marked passage in Vischer's commentary to Goethe's "Faust": "Certainly: without the mood, no poetry. But the poet (and artist) must not be too soft, must not always wait for the mood just to come. He must, like any other workman, force himself on many a long day to work in the hope that in the course of progress the beginning will improve. Even the poet has to exert his will if something is to be accomplished" (*Gewiss: ohne Stimmung keine Poesie. Aber der Dichter [und Künstler] darf auch nicht zu weich sein, nicht immer warten, dass die Stimmung eben komme. Er muss doch wie ein anderer Arbeiter auch gar manchen lieben Tag sich zur Arbeit zwingen in der Hoffnung, dass im Fortgang der Anfang sich verbessere. Auch der Poet braucht eben Willensakte wenn etwas fertig werden soll*). There is surely a sorrowful autobiographical significance to be seen in the passage from Reichel's "Day of Judgment" which Brahms has marked with several exclamation marks: "Sufferings raged in his soul, which only he can feel who is condemned to sorrow over an unsuccessful existence" (*In seiner Seele wühlten Schmerzen, die nur der vermag zu fühlen, der verdammt ist zu trauern über ein verfehltes Dasein*). What may the solitary, aging composer, who had so often turned away the possibility of quiet domestic happiness, have felt when he could not rid himself of these poet's words?

But with Brahms's native humor it is a matter of course that tragedy had its satirical relief. Jokes, funny and coarse, and whatever curiosities he ran across in his books he always marked; and it is scarcely surprising that, as for example in the highly-spiced treasury of the people's sayings, "Wie das Volk spricht," the coarsest expressions, defying transcription or translation, Brahms only much later copied into his little book.

Similarly it was but natural that in the Koran, the misogynist Brahms should have approvingly marked all those passages that deal with the inferiority of women.

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Brahms's passion for collecting and his reactions to the compositions he studied are deeply rooted in his inmost self. His unusual sympathy with folk-art, too, becomes intelligible when one calls to mind the important part the national folk-element played in his own compositions. Brahms was not at all displeased that a good part of his fame, both contemporary and in generations to come, should be based on his arrangements of folk-songs and on the "Hungarian Dances" which were built upon gypsy melodies. And how many delicious folk-tunes—in altered form but at heart unmistakable—found admittance into his vocal and instrumental music!

Native to his very character, too, is the almost pedantic conscientiousness Brahms showed in the study of books and music, always endeavoring to improve and set right what was wrong. He made upon everything that closely interested him the same high demands that he set himself as a matter of course in his own work. He would file away for years at his compositions, altering, improving, pouring them from one mold into another, until he had succeeded in giving them the perfect form.

Brahms was a fanatic of learning. If he compiled a list of the parallel fifths and octaves he met with in classical compositions, it was from no petty joy in discovering little shortcomings, but because he was bent on finding out in what cases these progressions, forbidden of older theorists, were possible, even necessary. The words underlined by Brahms in Goethe's "Theory of Color" were for him a sort of confession of faith: "We are only original because we know nothing" (*Wir sind nur originell, weil wir nichts wissen*).

Many such threads link Brahms the collector with Brahms the composer, clearly showing that his passion for collecting sprang from the very nature of his artistic personality.

(Translated by M. D. Herter Norton.)



## BERNHARD ZIEHN, PRECURSOR

By WINTHROP SARGEANT

THE work of Bernhard Ziehn has never been widely known in America, and, until recently, comparatively small attention has been paid it elsewhere by the musicological world at large. He was known during his lifetime in Chicago as a teacher of composition with whom a group of prominent figures—including John Alden Carpenter, Wilhelm Middelschulte, Hugo Kaun, Fannie Bloomfield Zeisler, Eleanor Everest Freer, Glenn Dillard Gunn, and Julius Gold—took harmony lessons. He was known to be treated with great respect by Theodore Thomas, who on occasion had, it was reported, changed various details of interpretation after consulting Ziehn. He was also known as the contributor of sundry critical and theoretical articles—all of a very positive, and some of an apparently downright ill-tempered, nature—to various periodicals and journals. To a limited group of internationally known theorists, a group including Hugo Riemann, von Oettingen, Georg Capellen and Hermann Schröder, he was known—and here he was also feared—as a relentless and unimpeachable critic of contemporary theory.

But these facts show merely the smaller facets in Ziehn's complex personality. His most important contributions to the science of music were appreciated, apparently, only by a few isolated individuals: Busoni, who had expressed on several occasions, and in no uncertain terms, a heartfelt admiration for his work, and his own pupils.

The reasons for this obscurity concerning a man whom Bruno Weigl has since described as the "most thorough and discerning theoretician since Rameau"<sup>1</sup> are not hard to find. Some of the best of Ziehn's writings are scattered through various periodicals and have only recently been collected and reprinted in book form; and his larger works are all characterized by a certain lack of superficial literary embellishment which may conceivably have rendered them somewhat unpalatable to all but the most assiduous students.

A more profound reason for this obscurity lay in the fact that Ziehn was staunchly opposed to the tendency which manifested itself among practically all the leading theorists of his time, and which had received enormous impetus from the researches of

<sup>1</sup>"Die alterierten Akkorde," article in *Die Musik*, XIV, 8 (Jan., 1915).

Helmholtz: to base, or to attempt to base, the theory of harmonic structure upon the physical phenomena of resonance. While Ziehn's procedure was scientific in an inclusive sense of the term, the data from which he drew his conclusions—the data which he marshals with such astounding scholarship in his various writings—were drawn, not from what he considered to be the totally irrelevant domain of natural science, but from the literature of music itself. "Not the laws of physics, but the masterpieces of music are the standard of judgment for the science of music."<sup>2</sup> This was the starting-point of Ziehn's reasoning. At a time when Hugo Riemann was dominating the field of musical theory in central Europe with what then seemed a "scientific" (if not wholly consistent) basis of tone-relations, the method of Ziehn was, doubtless, dismissed in the enthusiasm of the moment as merely metaphysical.

Intervening years have, however, somewhat dampened the ardor of the "physical" harmonists. Composers have failed to be greatly influenced by their researches, and the younger theorists of Germany—among them Edwin von der Nüll<sup>3</sup> and Bruno Weigl—have flocked in greater numbers to Ziehn's point of view, not failing to acknowledge him as their forerunner. Weigl, in the preface to his recently published "*Harmonielehre*"<sup>4</sup> writes: "Eine wesentliche Anregung und Unterstützung erfuhr der Verfasser hierbei durch das *Harmonielehrwerk* von Bernhard Ziehn, einem Musikgelehrten, der, abgesehen von den ausgezeichneten Qualitäten seines Werkes, schon darum als der genialste Theoretiker des verflorenen Jahrhunderts bezeichnet werden muss, da er bereits in seiner 1887 veröffentlichten *Harmonielehre* die Akkordik unserer Gegenwarts-Impressionisten vorausgesehen und theoretisch behandelt hat."<sup>5</sup>

Ziehn had, indeed, prefigured much of what later became the harmonic stock-in-trade of the impressionists; and, as is the case sooner or later with all true prophets, he is receiving his vindication.

The vindication comes late in this case however. Ziehn died in 1912 of a lingering ailment, without the economic comforts to which a career as a successful scholar would have entitled him,

<sup>2</sup>Letter from Ziehn to Julius Gold, January 10, 1912.

<sup>3</sup>"*Moderne Harmonik*," Leipzig, 1932.

<sup>4</sup>Bruno Weigl, "*Harmonielehre*," B. Schott's Söhne, Mainz, 1925 (2 Vols.)

<sup>5</sup>"The author derived considerable inspiration and help from the treatise on harmony by Bernhard Ziehn, a scholar who, aside from the excellent qualities of his book, must be considered the most original theorist of the last century, as he already foresaw and subjected to theoretical analysis, in his *Harmonielehre* which appeared in 1887, the chordal system of our contemporary impressionists."



Bernhard Ziehn

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without official recognition by educational institutions either in the land of his birth or in that of his adoption. Born in the town of Erfurt, Thuringia, on January 20, 1845, Ziehn spent a boyhood in which musical education played only an incidental rôle. He was trained as a school-teacher, and later followed the calling of one for a short time in Mülhausen. In 1868 he came to America, settling in Chicago, where he found employment as a teacher of musical theory and history, German, and higher mathematics at the German Lutheran School. Shortly, in 1871, he abandoned this position, having decided to devote his entire time to the cultivation of the science of music. He taught musical theory extensively, and for a brief period occupied a post as a synagogue organist. In 1881 he published his first works, "System der Übungen für Clavierspieler," and "Lehrgang für den ersten Klavierunterricht" (Hamburg: Hugo Pohle). Seven years later, with the publication of the "Harmonie- und Modulationslehre," his important contributions to musical scholarship began.

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To point out merely the fact that Ziehn in 1886 anticipated many details of technique that are commonly thought, even today, to have been first formulated by Schönberg and other later theorists, would be, however, to lay undue stress on the more sensational aspects of the case. After all, the methods of the Impressionists and post-Wagnerian composers of central Europe were the outcome of a cultural necessity and of a technical evolution which it transcended the powers of any one individual to influence to any radical degree; and it is safe to say that if Ziehn happened to be the first to formulate some of these methods in theoretical terms, he was merely reducing to the niceties of system what was common property to all the forward-looking composers of the time. The important thing is that Ziehn so sensitively guessed the temper of that time as to be able to place the technical paraphernalia of his contemporaries in a musicological-historical perspective, and that the perspective still holds good.

Ziehn's principal achievements in the field of musicology were: (1) The formulation and substantiation of an extremely inclusive theory of chromatic harmony at a time when chromaticism was still a highly experimental matter; (2) The dissipation (to paraphrase Mr. Glenn Dillard Gunn)<sup>6</sup> of an enormous clutter

<sup>6</sup>*Chicago Tribune*, September 9, 1912.

of irrelevant and purely theoretical tradition that had been inherited by the pedagogues of his time—tradition which, as he abundantly proved, had no foundation in the actual practice of composers, but was merely the accretion of centuries of academic thought.

Ziehn brought great clarity of mind and a profound knowledge of musical literature to this work. Brushing aside any attempt to justify the procedures of music through acoustical theories of chord-generation or scale-structure, he got rid, at one sweep, of the more or less speculative difficulties which beset the works of his contemporaries. This simplified the problem. Music did not stand in need of any justification from outside sources. It was itself an organic phenomenon, containing within itself its own laws of form and of development. And it was only from a study of these laws, as revealed in the practice of composers, that an intelligible theory of harmony could be evolved. Whatever the various opinions of the physicists, music since the time of Sebastian Bach had known no practical difference in the size of the half-tone. That was sufficient. For the purposes of contemporary harmonic formulas all half-tones were equal. Accepting thus at the outset a tempered chromatic-enharmonic basis for his system, Ziehn revived and developed the theory of harmonic structure commonly credited to Kirnberger—the theory that all possible chordic formations are reducible to theories of adjacent thirds. This axiom, one must admit, offered enormous possibilities as an instrument of classification when applied to the formulas of European music from Bach to the earlier Schönberg. And it was as an instrument of classification that Ziehn employed it. The method was clear and simple. By juxtaposing thirds of different sizes, all possible chords could be formed. Then it remained to discover where and how, in the whole development of modern European music, these particular combinations had been used. It was here that Ziehn's unparalleled knowledge of the history of musical formulas shone. The "Harmonie- und Modulationslehre" is filled with examples, references and citations, demonstrating how and in what context each formula was used by the masters.

One advantage that his frank acceptance of the chromatic-enharmonic system gave him, was the possibility of offering for the first time a complete classification of the question of chromatic triads, seventh-chords and ninth-chords—a question which was crying aloud at that time from the pages of Liszt, Wagner and Bruckner for theoretical solution. (It should be remembered that Richard Strauss's first important symphonic work, "Don



Juan," was written a year after the publication of Ziehn's book.) It gave him likewise a key to the problems involved in the irregular chromatic resolution of diatonic seventh-chords. Finally it led to Ziehn's technique of "symmetrical inversion"—a chromatic application of the old *contrarium reversum*—which he first evolved, according to his own statement<sup>7</sup> in 1876, and to which reference will be found in all his books. It is interesting to note that this device, which is perhaps demonstrated most completely in his "Five- and Six-Part Harmonies" and in the "Canonical Studies," has many points in common with the method of inversion employed by Schönberg in treating the "Grundgestalt" sequences that have become so famous a part of his later technique.

The fund of scholarship that Ziehn could muster up when it came to giving historical precedent for various chordal progressions, was, as has already been said, enormous. A particularly good example of this erudition is to be found in an article published in the "Allgemeine Musik-Zeitung" (July 10-17, 1903) on the first chord in the Scherzo of the Ninth Symphony of Bruckner. The chord in question—a striking harmonic combination for its time, it is true—had been heralded by the German critics as an "Unikum." It is amusing to see Ziehn set his heavy artillery to work in this article, adducing indisputable proof that the chord, which he had catalogued years before in his "Harmonie- und Modulationslehre" as Chromatic Seventh-chord No. VI, was so far from being an "Unikum" as to have been used four hundred years previously by Henry VI (in his "Et in Terra"), by Pergolesi, by Friedemann Bach, by Beethoven, by Bruckner himself in various other places, and by a long list of others including Wagner and d'Albert!

Among the details in which Ziehn definitely anticipated later theorists was his formulation of the whole-tone scale and of the whole-tone chord. The writer is indebted to Mr. Julius Gold, of San Francisco, for first calling this point to his attention. In the "Harmonie- und Modulationslehre," p. 153, the scale is described, and examples of its use by Liszt, Schubert and others are given. Still more remarkable is the fact that the "Ganztonakkord," mentioned by Schönberg in his "Harmonielehre" and described as having been used by him and by Debussy in "Pelléas et Mélisande" at approximately the same time (1902), is also clearly formulated on p. 145 of Ziehn's book, being described as a "pseudo ninth-chord consisting of all the tones of the whole-tone scale." Oddly enough, the method of resolution for this chord as prescribed by

<sup>7</sup>"Über die symmetrische Umkehrung," *Allgemeine Musik-Zeitung*, XXX, 1903.

Ziehn corresponds exactly to that given in the Schönberg work which it preceded by almost a quarter of a century.

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Ziehn's complete works include—besides the system of exercises for pianists, referred to above, and a series of classical transcriptions also published early in his career—the "Harmonie- und Modulationslehre," an English edition of the latter entitled "Manual of Harmony" (issued in Milwaukee), the "Five- and Six-Part Harmonies," the "Canonical Studies" and a series of contributions to periodicals. Several of these last, as has been remarked, must be placed among his most significant work. Recently the German-American Historical Society of Illinois performed a valuable service by republishing, and making available for the first time in book form, a large number of these contributions. They appear with some related biographical material in the Society's year-book for 1927, published in Chicago.

The most important of the works—the one upon which Ziehn's reputation as a theorist must eventually rest—is, of course, the "Harmonie- und Modulationslehre." This work, which was finished according to the author's account in 1886, and copyrighted in 1887, appeared in Berlin in 1888 under the imprint of R. Sulzer. It was reprinted in 1910, with a new title-page, by Chr. F. Vieweg, also of Berlin. The book, as is characteristic of Ziehn's work in general, contains so little of exposition and so much in the way of examples and citations that the student's first impression is likely to be one of bewilderment before so vast an array of material. Ziehn's method is inductive, and his smallest statement is backed up with a sheaf of data that would do justice to a thesis on biology. This peculiarity sets the work aside from other books on the subject. Its title is, indeed, somewhat misleading. It is not a harmony text-book in the ordinary sense of the term at all, but rather an analytic study of the whole subject of harmonic formulas.

Preliminaries of scale and chord construction, and of diatonic chord connection, having been disposed of, Ziehn launches into the chromatic-enharmonic classification of chordal progression which constitutes the most remarkable feature of his work. This classification rests upon a law, truly revolutionary at the time of its foundation, which Ziehn states on p. 56 in these terms: "In jedem Dreiklange oder Septimenaccorde irgend einer Art, sowie im grossen Nonenaccorde, kann jede Umkehrung die Grundform

eines anderen, aus denselben Tönen bestehenden Accordes sein; also jeder accordische Ton kann Grundton werden."<sup>8</sup> Space does not permit here of an account of the many ways in which Ziehn applied this law in building his harmonic compendium. One of the most interesting features of the book, resting indirectly on this law, is to be found in the classification of chromatic seventh-chords. Of these, Ziehn recognized nine. As originally designated by him they are the following:



The Roman numerals are arbitrarily chosen by Ziehn for purposes of identification. They do not refer to degrees of the scale.

The second inversion of No. I is the Augmented Third-Fourth-Sixth-chord of conventional theory; the first inversion of No. IV is the Augmented Fifth-Sixth chord; No. VI is the one used by Bruckner as the first chord in the Scherzo of his Ninth Symphony.

Much water has flown under the bridge, harmonically speaking, since this work was first published, and much of what Ziehn then formulated has now, through frequent use by composers and through reformulation here and there in subsequent treatises, become commonplace. Indeed, much subsequent writing on the subject has tended only to obscure Ziehn's place in the scheme of things by expressing ideas closely related to those he put forward, while ignoring his work. The "Harmonie- und Modulationslehre," appearing when it did, stands as a remarkable theoretical achievement, an achievement that should give Ziehn a place of outstanding importance among theorists of the post-Wagnerian period.

The English edition of this work, changed considerably in matters of detail, appeared in 1907 under the title "Manual of Harmony," Vol. I (Milwaukee: William A. Kaun and Leipzig: Carl Fr. Fleischer). Volume II never appeared, but was left in manuscript and is now in the possession of Ziehn's son, Dr. Robert S. Ziehn of Chicago. The published volume corresponds roughly to the German treatise in scope, although it is considerably shorter—large, and in some cases important, sections having been deleted. The deleted parts may have been intended by Ziehn for inclusion, along with new material, in Volume II. The present writer has

<sup>8</sup>"In every triad or seventh-chord of whatever sort, as well as in every major ninth-chord, each inversion can be the root position of another chord containing the same tones; that is, each tone in the chord can become a root."

never seen the manuscript of Volume II, in fact was unaware of its existence until advised of the fact by Mr. Julius Gold. In view of Ziehn's growing importance, a complete edition of this work (which is Ziehn's second and last general treatise on the subject of harmony) should undoubtedly be undertaken, as the work may contain material of the greatest significance to musicology.

The "Five- and Six-Part Harmonies," in German and English (Milwaukee: William A. Kaun and Berlin: Richard Kaun, 1911) differs from the above work in that it is a study in the technique of part-writing rather than a general theoretical treatise. It consists, characteristically, of hundreds of examples, textual explanations being few and succinct. Here the examples are almost all by Ziehn himself, illustrating the various methods of chordal progression in five and six voices, and covering the more complex fields of chromatic harmony. It closes with a group of complete choral settings by Ziehn, including a remarkable treatment of *Ein feste Burg*.

The "Canonical Studies, A New Technic in Composition," German and English (Milwaukee: William A. Kaun and Berlin: Richard Kaun, 1912) appeared posthumously. Ziehn was on his death-bed as it went to press, and the final proofs were read and corrected by his close friend and disciple, Julius Gold. The work is remarkable for its exhaustive development of all the contrapuntal devices pertaining to canonical technique, including a final exposition of the uses of symmetrical inversion. Ziehn begins the book with the following remark: "A canon is by definition strict. Our greatest authorities assert 'strict' canons can be carried out in the Octave or Prime only. The examples given in this book demonstrate that real canons are possible in any interval. . . ." The implication, which is presently stated in so many words, is that canonical writing need not be limited to simple diatonic harmonic thought, but, indeed, may (and for its complete development *must*) entail a chromatic-enharmonic system of harmonization transcending classical conceptions of tonality. As usual, the book consists almost entirely of examples, and there are strict canons galore, not only in the Prime and Octave but even in the minor Second, major Seventh and the Tritone. Most of them are by Ziehn; but several by his pupils Grace Chadbourne, John Alden Carpenter, and Otto Wolf are included. Busoni thought very highly of the theories which Ziehn propounds in this work, having made use of them in the writing of his *Fantasia Contrapuntistica* and in his editorial notes to various works of Bach.

At least two of Ziehn's magazine articles stand out as such important contributions to scholarship as to take on the dignity of independent works. These are the "Betrachtungen über den Choralsatz, nebst Vor- Zwischen- und Nachbemerkungen, im Anschluss an die vorgeblich Bach'sche Lukas-Passion" published in the "Allgemeine Musik-Zeitung," XVIII, 1891 (Nos. 27-39); which was followed by a sequel, the "Zweiter Beitrag zur Lukas-Passions-Forschung" published in the "Allgemeine Musik-Zeitung," XX, 1893 (Nos. 14-18); and the essay "Über die Kirchentöne," published in *Die Musik*, III, No. 3 (1903-1904). The first and its sequel constitute a lengthy contribution to the question of authenticity of the St. Luke Passion attributed to Bach. The second is a discussion of the church modes involving a mass of research into the actual usages of the fifteenth- and sixteenth-century composers and presenting a greatly clarified view of the subject. Both have been reprinted in the year-book for 1927 of the German-American Historical Society of Illinois.

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Such a short resumé of Ziehn's work as is offered here cannot pretend to do more than scratch the surface of his contribution to musical theory. The writer can but attempt, by a little shouting and gesticulating, to attract further attention to a still much-neglected figure in the history of musicology. It is to be hoped that Ziehn's writings will before long receive more general recognition in this country. His principles of research offer, indeed, the basis for a whole school of musicological thought, resting on an approach to music as an organic phenomenon, evolving in its own fashion from inscrutable causes, but subject nevertheless to laws that can be divined through observation of the habits, so to speak, of musical compositions themselves.

## WAS MENDELSSOHN INDEBTED TO WEBER?

AN ATTEMPTED SOLUTION OF AN OLD CONTROVERSY

By GEORG KINSKY

NO listener can have failed to notice the remarkable correspondence between the first measures of the second part of the "Mermaids' Song" from Weber's *Oberon* and the concluding melody of Mendelssohn's "Midsummer Night's Dream" Overture. The parallel has already been the subject of frequent comment. Richard Sternfeld, for instance, in an entertaining study of musical quotation and self-quotation,<sup>1</sup> points out the striking resemblance between the two melodies and remarks that one is tempted to think of an actual quotation by Mendelssohn in this connection, or at least of a reminiscence. "The case, however, appears to be one of pure coincidence . . . and the question of priority cannot be settled." Ernst Wolff reaches similar conclusions in his excellent Mendelssohn biography:<sup>2</sup> "In view of the simultaneous composition of the two works, the possibility of direct influence, not to say conscious quotation, seems to be excluded on both sides." An informative essay by Richard Hennig, published in *Die Musik* for December 1929, returns once again to "this unique parallel, still unexplained . . . perhaps the most puzzling coincidence in all musical literature."

Not only have both composers chosen the key of E major [Hennig continues], but their two compositions date from almost exactly the same time (1826). Young Mendelssohn's genial work appears to have been written a little later than Weber's, but at the time of its composition Mendelssohn cannot yet have known of *Oberon*. How, then, are we to explain this parallel, which, after all, cannot have been an accident?

Hennig's formulation of the question led me to undertake a reëxamination of the controversy. Priority unquestionably belongs to Weber, I find, and Mendelssohn undoubtedly knew the *Oberon* music before completing his "Midsummer Night's Dream"

<sup>1</sup>*Musikalische Skizzen und Humoresken* (Regensburg, 1914), p. 26.

<sup>2</sup>Vol. 17 of the series *Berühmte Musiker*, edited by Heinrich Reimann (2d ed., Berlin, 1909), p. 47.



Overture. The parallel is nevertheless to be understood as pure coincidence.

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My first step was to establish the exact time when the two compositions were written. F. W. Jähns's chronological and thematic catalogue of Weber's works (Berlin, 1871), a classic that leaves scarcely a single question pertaining to the master's creative activity unanswered, places the first germ of the "Mermaids' Song" as early as 1822 or 1823, when its first measures, arranged for a trio of wind instruments (clarinet and two horns), are found among rejected sketches for the opera *Euryanthe*. The finale of *Oberon* Act II, which begins with the "Mermaids' Song," was completely sketched by January 7, 1826, according to Weber's meticulous diary, and fully scored by the 22d of the same month. A note at the end of the London autograph of the overture in score, the last number to be completed, fixes the date on which the opera as a whole was finished: "Completed April 9, 1826, in the morning, at a quarter of twelve, and with it the entire opera *Oberon*. *Soli Deo Gloria!!!* C. M. v. Weber."<sup>3</sup>

Once again the publication rights for Germany went to the enterprising A. M. Schlesinger, the Berlin music-dealer who had already profited conspicuously through the publication of many of Weber's other works—I need mention only *Der Freischütz*, *Preziosa*, "Leyer und Schwert," and the "Aufforderung zum Tanz." Discussion leading to the sale of these rights evidently began as early as December, 1825, during Weber's visit to Berlin for the rehearsals and first performances of his *Euryanthe*. In a letter of January 23, 1826, Weber promises Schlesinger the early delivery of the vocal score and on February 8 returns the publisher's contract with his signature.<sup>4</sup> Schlesinger's purchase of the vocal score<sup>5</sup> is reported on February 15 in A. B. Marx's journal, the *Berliner Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*,<sup>6</sup> while a further notice at the

<sup>3</sup>See Jähns, *l.c.*, pp. 357, 390, 391, and 398 for these details.

<sup>4</sup>Numbers 649 and 650 in the auction catalogue issued in November, 1922, by the Berlin firm of Karl Ernst Henrici (Catalogue LXXX), which describes (Numbers 604 to 653) the entire collection of Weber's musical manuscripts and letters, formerly in the archives of the Schlesinger music-publishing house in Berlin.

<sup>5</sup>The correspondence reveals that the purchase price was 2,000 thaler, quite a considerable sum for those days and an indication of the composer's growing reputation. For *Der Freischütz* Weber received 220 thaler, for *Euryanthe* 606 thaler.

<sup>6</sup>III (1826), 56.

end of March<sup>7</sup> announces that the vocal score, arranged by the composer himself, "together with various other arrangements from this opera . . . will be published as early as the beginning of June at the Schlesinger book-store."

The piano arrangement of the overture was not forwarded to Berlin until April 18, when Weber enclosed a tiny manuscript of the whole number—now unfortunately lost—in a letter from London.<sup>8</sup> For obvious reasons Schlesinger hastened the work of engraving as much as possible. The one hundred and fifty-six plates needed for the vocal score were finished during the early part of the summer, making it possible to place the work on sale sometime in July, 1826. The eighth number (June 24) of the "Literarisch-artistisch-musikalischer Anzeiger zum Freimüthigen und zur Musikalischen Zeitung"—a so-called "Intelligenzblatt" supplementing these two Berlin journals—carries a brief advertisement with the caption "To be published in July," while a detailed announcement of the score and single excerpts from the opera in the ninth number (August 5) is headed "Just published."

It goes without saying that the young Mendelssohn was one of the first to study this eagerly awaited last work, for it was precisely in Berlin that the reputation of its composer, so recently deceased, had stood the highest. At all events, it was during the winter of 1826 and 1827, as Heinrich Dorn recounts in his memoirs,<sup>9</sup> "before the finished vocal score had been published and before any opera house could think of a performance of *Oberon*," that the elderly Schlesinger decided to give the entire opera in his home for music-lovers of the capital. Stars from the Berlin Opera took the principal rôles; Felix Mendelssohn, who had been engaged as accompanist and coach, was to have played the orchestra part on the piano from score. At the final rehearsal, however, Mendelssohn became involved in an argument with Frau Schulz-Killitschgy, the prima donna, over an entrance in the first finale. The singer obstinately refused to yield. The temperamental young composer accordingly resigned, being absolutely in the right, and Dorn, a volunteer member of the chorus, was obliged to step in unprepared and take charge of the dress rehearsal and of the performance on the following day. Felix relented, however, and

<sup>7</sup>III (1826), 104.

<sup>8</sup>See Henrici's Catalogue LXXX, No. 651, and Jähns, *l.c.*, p. 392. The original manuscript of the piano arrangement for the English edition is a part of the autograph collection of Louis Koch of Frankfurt.

<sup>9</sup>*Aus meinem Leben*, 2. Sammlung (Berlin, 1871), pp. 102ff. Dorn's opera *Die Nibelungen* (1854) is interesting as an early attempt to deal with the subject of the "Ring."

not only attended the performance, but actually took part in it, offering himself to Dorn as partner for the four-hand storm music in Act II. "By chance, then, I was the first to give the whole of *Oberon* on the continent," Dorn boasts, "for a few days later Schlesinger published the vocal score, and the entire world took possession of it." Here, to be sure, Dorn is guilty of a slight inaccuracy which he himself corrects later in a second briefer account of the incident in the section of his memoirs devoted to Mendelssohn;<sup>10</sup> Schlesinger's concert did not take place until the winter months, but in July, as explained above, the vocal score was already in print. "During the winter semester of 1826 and 1827 all Berlin seemed intoxicated by *Oberon's* melodies," Dorn goes on, "and there can scarcely have been a musical tea-party at which at least *one* number from the popular opera was not heard." The first German opera-house to perform Weber's swan-song was the Leipzig Theatre—on Christmas Eve, 1826. The Prussian capital, where *Oberon* was first given on July 2, 1828, took ninth place, following Vienna, Cassel, Frankfort, Bremen, Dresden, Mannheim, and Weimar.

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The overture to the "Midsummer Night's Dream" we may consider . . . as a piece of Mendelssohn's own life [Sebastian Hensel writes in his classic chronicle of the Mendelssohn family] for it is as much the result of the events of the year 1826 in the [new] Mendelssohn house [Leipziger Strasse 3] as of the influence of Shakespeare; and if we are not very much mistaken, this influence is just what lends such a singular charm to the overture.

A remark Mendelssohn makes in a letter of July 7—"Today or tomorrow I shall begin to dream the Midsummer Night's Dream"<sup>11</sup>—settles the time when the overture was begun, while the original manuscript in the Berlin Staatsbibliothek bears at the end the date August 6, so that the work of composition must have occupied exactly four weeks. Opposed to this, however, is the account given by Ferdinand Hiller, a fellow-artist of about Mendelssohn's own age, whom the composer visited at his home in Frankfort in the fall of the following year (1827).

. . . And then [at Schelble's home] he played the "Midsummer Night's Dream" Overture! [Hiller reports].<sup>12</sup> He told me how long

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, 3. *Sammlung* (Berlin, 1872), p. 67.

<sup>11</sup>Quoted by Theodor Müller-Reuter, *Lexikon der deutschen Konzertliteratur* (Leipzig, 1909), p. 76, without reference to source.

<sup>12</sup>*Mendelssohn: Letters and Recollections*, tr. by M. E. von Glehn (London, 1874), p. 11.

and eagerly he had been working at it—how in his spare time between the lectures at the Berlin University he had gone on extemporizing at it on the piano of a beautiful lady who lived close by. "For a whole year I did hardly anything else," he said; and certainly he had not wasted his time.

A charming anecdote, to be sure, but one that cannot be reconciled with the facts, for Mendelssohn did not enter the University until Easter, 1827, at a time when the overture had not only been finished for more than six months, but had even—on February 20—been given its first public performance.<sup>13</sup>

A. B. Marx, close friend of the Mendelssohn family and Felix's faithful adviser in artistic matters, tells still another story of the conception of the work and of the way in which it took on its present form. The graphic account that finds a place in his memoirs runs as follows:<sup>14</sup>

Even now I can see him with his flushed face, coming in to me and saying: "Look here! I have a capital idea! How does it strike you? I shall write an overture to the 'Midsummer Night's Dream.'" I expressed my hearty approval. A few days later he . . . returned, bringing me the score, the first part already finished. The introductory chords and the dance of the elves were just as we now know them. Then, alas, followed the overture proper—a joyous, delightfully animated, and altogether . . . praiseworthy movement that disappointed me only in its failure to suggest the "Midsummer Night's Dream." As a loyal friend, I felt obliged to tell him frankly what I thought. He was provoked and hurt—almost wounded—and ran off without saying good-by. I had to put up with this as best I could, and for several days I avoided his house.

Marx then goes on to tell how Mendelssohn, soon afterward, sent him the torn manuscript with the message: "You are right in everything! Only come, now, and help!" and how he (Marx) then explained his conviction that an overture of this kind ought to be a true and complete reflection of the drama it introduces.

He agreed whole-heartedly and took up the work again with enthusiasm. Only the allusion to the lovers' wanderings in the first motive (e, d-sharp, d, c-sharp) could be taken over from the original version; everything else had to be recreated. To object was useless! "It's too absurd (*zu doll*), too extreme!" he cried, when I insisted on his finding a place for the comedians too and even for Bottom's amorous bray. I had my way, and the overture took the form we now know. . . . When it was first performed at the Mendelssohns', the composer's father explained to the numerous guests that the overture was really more my

<sup>13</sup>Though Hiller claims "the most absolute reliability" for his reminiscences of his deceased friend, it should be remembered that it was not until 1873 that these reminiscences were written down from memory.

<sup>14</sup>*Erinnerungen: Aus meinem Leben* (Berlin, 1865), II, 231ff.

work than his son's. There is no foundation for this at all. . . . The original idea and its execution belong to Felix; counsel alone was my duty and my share.

And though we ought readily to concede Marx's influence on the consistent characterization, as Wolff justly observes,<sup>15</sup> we admire all the more the artistry of the youthful composer "who formed the work as if in a single mold after his first draft had been rejected."

After the overture had passed the crucial test at the Mendelssohn home, it was publicly performed for the first time on February 20, 1827. This memorable occurrence took place at the hall of the Schützenhaus in Stettin, at the second of the subscription concerts conducted there by Carl Loewe. Mendelssohn played the Weber "Konzertstück," Op. 79 and, with Loewe, an unpublished concerto for two pianos. The second half of the program brought Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, "in which Herr Mendelssohn, as a *combattant* among the first violins, won the respect of his fellow-players."<sup>16</sup>

\* \*  
\*

Our whole problem turns, however, on the recognition that the melody in dispute, which appears as postlude (*Abgesang*) shortly before the end of the overture, is no new motive-formation, but simply, as Wolff says, a dynamic and rhythmic transformation of the radiant E-major principal subject, played now in more moderate tempo ("Poco ritenuto"), but harmonized exactly as before.

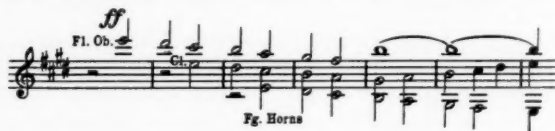


It may be added that, by melodic extension (*Fortspinnung*), this

<sup>15</sup>L.c., p. 49.

<sup>16</sup>See the detailed report, "Felix Mendelssohn in Stettin," in the *Berliner Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*, IV (1827), 83ff: "... It is not that the eighteen-year-old artist *promises* extraordinary things; he *accomplishes* them."

principal subject, whose characteristic feature is diatonic descent, becomes the woodwind motive treated in imitation.



This motive, in turn, has exerted a melodic influence on the second subsidiary subject, the same which, according to Marx, portrays the lovers' wanderings,



and also appears, note for note, as bass of the first subsidiary subject.



Conclusive evidence of the organic unity of the work as a whole, revealed by thematic analysis!

Though the program on which the overture is based is so clear and unmistakable that it requires no commentary, the composer himself has needlessly disclosed the obvious in a letter dated February 15, 1833, written to his publishers, Breitkopf & Härtel, shortly before the first performance of the work in Leipzig on the 21st:<sup>17</sup>

... It is impossible for me to outline, for the [concert] program, the sequence of ideas that gave rise to this composition, for just this sequence of ideas is my overture. It follows the play closely, however, so that it may perhaps be very proper to indicate the outstanding situations of the drama in order that the audience may have Shakespeare in mind or form an idea of the piece. I think it should be enough to point out that the fairy rulers, Oberon and Titania, appear throughout the play with all their people, now here, now there; and that there afterwards come in, first a Duke Theseus of Athens, who goes hunting in the forest with his bride; then two pairs of lovers, who lose and find one another again; then a troop of rude clumsy journeymen, playing their boorish jokes; and at last the elves again, making fun of everyone—these are the elements from which the play is put together. At the end, after everything has

<sup>17</sup>Communicated in Oskar von Hase's *Breitkopf & Härtel: Gedenkschrift und Arbeitsbericht*, II (Leipzig, 1919), 61.



been satisfactorily settled and the principal players have joyfully left the stage, the elves follow them, bless the house, and disappear with the dawn. So the play ends and my overture too.

The melody of the postlude is accordingly the musical counterpart of the blessing Oberon asks for the wedding-house, and for this reason the insinuating melody reappears at the very end of the incidental music for the drama—not written until seventeen years later, in 1843—where it accompanies Oberon's lines:

With this field-dew consecrate,  
Every fairy take his gait;  
And each several chamber bless,  
Through this palace, with sweet peace.

Robert Schumann actually found fault with Mendelssohn's later use of the melody,<sup>18</sup> regarding it—without justice, surely—as “too much a product of reflection.”

In this scene, which the composer ought to have provided with the freshest accompaniment possible, here, where music might have made its most telling effect, I had expected something original and newly created. . . . If Mendelssohn would only write something else in this place!

The postlude (*Abgesang*) being a mere transformation of the festive E-major melody, it should follow that the striking correspondence with Weber's “Mermaids' Song” is really no more than an accident. There can remain only the supposition that the ingenious Marx may have pointed out the possibility of the transformation to Mendelssohn, who might then have intended the “quotation” as an homage to the departed. There is, however, no particle of sound evidence on which to base such a supposition; if it were really to the point, Mendelssohn or Marx would surely have said so in some connection or other. It is clearly a case of “the duplicity of events!”

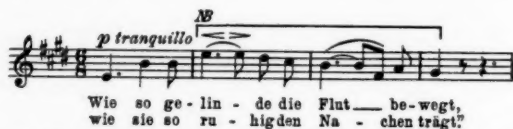
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Incidentally, a trace of Weber's *Oberon* melody can be shown in still another composition of Mendelssohn's, written only a little later—in the song “Scheidend” (“Parting”).<sup>19</sup> Published in the

<sup>18</sup>*Gesammelte Schriften*, IV (Leipzig, 1854), 280. Schumann pays this splendid tribute to the overture: “The bloom of youth lies over it as it does over hardly any other of the composer's works; in an inspired moment the mature master made his first and highest flight.”

<sup>19</sup>An autograph copy of the song, made in Vienna in August, 1830, for the album of the well-known collector Aloys Fuchs (Koch collection, Frankfurt), is headed “Auf der Fahrt.”

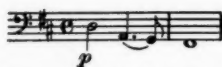
spring of 1830 as Op. 9, No. 6, it presumably dates, like other numbers among the twelve in Op. 9, from 1828, when the composer's friend J. G. Droysen, then a young student and gifted lyric poet, later celebrated as historian, was a welcome guest at the Mendelssohn home.<sup>20</sup> The song suggests a barcarolle and is written, curiously enough, in the key of E-major; its melody begins:



Curious, too, that the bass-figure of the introduction, repeated in the eighth bar,



anticipates the opening theme of the overture "Calm Sea and Prosperous Voyage" (Op. 27), composed in Berlin during the summer of 1828 and revised during the winter of 1833 and 1834 in Düsseldorf.



It appears, then, that the mood of the song ("On scarcely heaving waters we glide") provided the nucleus for the programmatic orchestral work suggested by Goethe's poem.

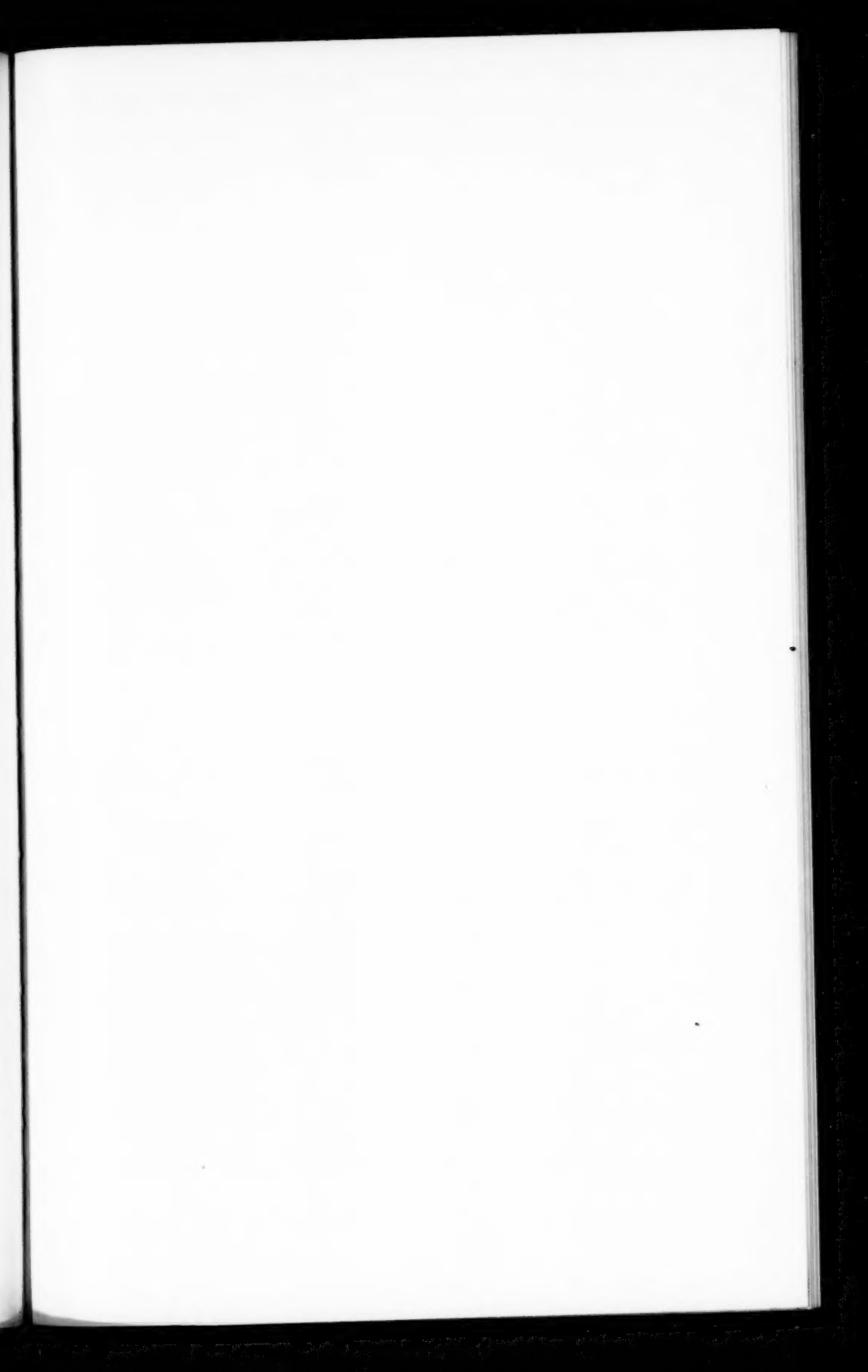
Goethe! Scarcely a controversy in which he may not be called as State's witness! Controversies over alleged "borrowings" are no exceptions from this rule. Friedrich von Müller, the Weimar Chancellor, notes on June 24, 1826, in his conversations with the poet:<sup>21</sup>

When I mentioned the charge made by the *Journal des débats* that a melody in Weber's *Freischütz* was stolen from Rousseau, Goethe complained bitterly of all such searching for parallel passages. Everything that could be rhymed, argued, or spoken had been anticipated, of course, but there could be no literature, no conversation, no social intercourse if we were always to have the objection: "I recall having read that in Aristotle, Homer, or some other classic."

<sup>20</sup>See Fanny Hensel's letter of December 27, 1828, to her London friend Karl Klingemann, printed in Sebastian Hensel's *The Mendelssohn Family*. The poems by Droysen included in Op. 9, appeared under the pseudonym "Voss."

<sup>21</sup>Edited by C. A. H. Burkhardt (Stuttgart, 1870).

(Translated by W. Oliver Strunk.)





Sent for  
Percy Grainger  
Aug 9 1931 by  
Arnold Dolmetsch

Last two pages of the manuscript score, made by Arnold Dolmetsch,  
of the Fantasy and Air in G minor by William Lawes

## ARNOLD DOLMETSCH: MUSICAL CONFUCIUS

By PERCY GRAINGER

**A** STUDENT of China recently pointed out that, while the great thinkers of the West usually preach more or less drastic reforms in the national life and habits of their own peoples, the philosophers of China mostly advocate a strict adherence to old Chinese traditions and customs. His explanation was simple enough: that the Western traditions and customs do not prove satisfactory to Westerners, while those handed down from past ages in China actually satisfy the Chinese—or did until recently.

With regard to music, it seems to me that we should not be afraid to admit that certain musical traditions and habits make for musical perfection as surely as others preclude it. If we concede that the harmonic consciousness of Western art-music arose out of melodious part-writing, and if we further postulate that some form of melodious many-voicedness has been an important ingredient of all the greatest art-music of Western peoples (that of Guillaume de Machaut, Palestrina, Byrd, Purcell, Bach, Wagner, Delius, etc.), we are logically led to the conclusion that balance of tone, between the various parts that make up any combination of voices or instruments, is essential to perfect music-making, since without it the movements and significance of the various parts cannot be clearly followed. In the light of these findings we may say, without hesitation, that the art-music habits and traditions of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries were favorable to musical perfection, because they insisted upon balance of tone in composing and performing, but that the art-music habits and traditions of the nineteenth century (and of the twentieth century too, so far as the latter is still dominated by the former) make inevitably for imperfection since, under their sway, balance of tone was thrown to the winds and has not yet been fully regained.

We may marvel that so all-essential a thing as tonal balance should ever have been allowed to disappear from Western art-music; but perhaps we shall understand this catastrophe better if we remember the strong influence from dance-music and other popular music that beat down upon art-music in and after Bach's time, realizing

that high strident instruments, such as the violin, were practical and desirable in dance-music—as making themselves better heard above the noise of the dancers than do lower and gentler instruments—thereby setting the vogue for noisy top-heavy art-music in which the tune (we could not rightly call it the melody) floated, as does oil upon water, above a slavish accompaniment, mostly non-polyphonic.

Let us compare a few salient perfections of tonal balance as they obtained in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries—and even in Bach's and Handel's time—with the imperfections of tonal balance practised in more recent times. The "consorts of viols" written for by the English masters of chamber music in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries presented an evenly graded assortment of higher and lower instruments—treble, alto, tenor and bass viols—with no gap greater than half an octave between the normal register of one of these instruments and that of the next above or below it in point of tuning. Compare with this our modern string quartet (and also the massed strings of our string orchestra and symphony orchestra) in which the lack of the tenor violin (tuned a fourth below our viola and forming a part of the original violin-family quartet consisting of violin, viola, tenor and violoncello) leaves a gap of an octave between the normal registers of the viola and the violoncello. This inevitably creates a weakness in the tenor register of the harmony or the polyphony which is fatal to proper tonal balance.<sup>1</sup> This top-heaviness of all modern string bodies is further aggravated by the absurd habit of employing in orchestras more violins to a part than violas and violoncellos to a part, in spite of the fact that the lower instruments (even when the proportion between higher and lower instruments is numerically even) have more difficulty in making their tones "tell" through the web of sound—which fact, if anyone doubts it, can readily be proved by playing through such a piece of polyphonic music as Bach's third Brandenburg Concerto (for 3 violins, 3 violas, 3 violoncellos, violone and cembalo) with a single instrument on each part. Yet reputable orchestras, all over the "civilized" world today, do not shrink from performing this same third Brandenburg Concerto with such limping disproportions as the following: 10 first violins, 10 second violins, 10 third violins, 4

<sup>1</sup>Dolmetsch's light-shedding remarks on the desirability of reintroducing the tenor violin (properly tuned, of course, as above described) into chamber-music and orchestra reveals his complete and sympathetic grasp of the needs of modern music. See Dolmetsch, *The Interpretation of the Music of the XVIIth and XVIIIth Centuries*, London, p. 455, and Robert Donington, *The Work and Ideas of Arnold Dolmetsch*, The Dolmetsch Foundation, Haslemere, Surrey, England, pp. 13-14.



first violas, 3 second violas, 3 third violas, 3 or 4 first 'cellos, 3 second 'cellos, 2 or 3 third 'cellos, 8 or 10 double-basses, and no cembalo or piano! We hardly need to examine accounts of the proportions of the fundamental voices (soprano, alto, tenor, bass) present in the chief Italian chapels during the fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries<sup>2</sup> in order to be convinced that the melodiously polyphonic vocal music of the Renaissance (that of Josquin de Prés, Palestrina, etc.) necessitated and produced perfectly balanced choirs—one glance at the music itself is enough. In Charles Sanford Terry's *Biography of Bach* (page 201) we may read Bach's letter of August 23, 1730, to the Council of the Leipzig Thomas School, in which he defines "the requirements of church music" and we note that he always calls for exactly the same number of voices for each of the four fundamental parts of the choir. We know that the chorus that took part in the Handel Celebration in Westminster Abbey, London, in 1784, had a decided over-weight of the lower voices (60 sopranos, 48 altos, 83 tenors, 84 basses)—taking into account, no doubt, the greater difficulty, above mentioned, that the lower voices experience in making themselves trenchantly heard in polyphonic texture. Yet in spite of these ascertainable, though still too little studied, facts regarding the traditions of the polyphonic periods, famous and respected modern choirs are not ashamed to essay the choral compositions of Palestrina, Bach, Handel and other polyphonic composers with top-heavy misproportions such as 162 sopranos, 131 altos, 48 tenors, 62 basses;<sup>3</sup> or 107 sopranos, 63 altos, 28 tenors, 34 basses.<sup>4</sup> But we must turn to the modern use of wind instruments and percussion instruments in the symphony orchestra and in the military band to see nineteenth-century indifference to balance of tone run riot: flute and piccolo used without bass-flutes;<sup>5</sup>

<sup>2</sup>"An equality of the numbers of the singers of the Chapel was established, realizing that any disproportion in the fundamental parts is disadvantageous to the good order of the harmony which results from equality of the parts" wrote Matteo Fornari in his history of the singers of the Pontifical Chapel of Rome (Fornari became a member of the Chapel in 1749). This statement is quoted on page 85 of *Rivista Musicale Italiana*, Torino, 1907. Of the choir of Saint Mark's, Venice, as it was constituted around the end of the seventeenth century, Giovanni Massuto remarks (page 48, Vol. I, of his *Della Musica Sacra in Italia*, Venice, 1889), "The singers of the Chapel were limited to 36, with 9 voices to each part." In the same work we are struck by the continually recurring multiples of four appearing in the total figures of choir-membership of the leading Italian chapels during the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries. (See Vol. I, pp. 47-49; Vol. II, p. 20; Vol. III, p. 87.)

<sup>3</sup>Berlin Philharmonic Choir around 1900, according to Arthur Mees, *Choirs and Choral Music*, p. 108.

<sup>4</sup>A typical American choir, 1931.

<sup>5</sup>Contrast with this the beautifully balanced "consorts" of 5 or more recorders (English flutes) of various sizes heard at the Dolmetsch Festivals at Haslemere.

2 oboes, 1 English horn and no bass-oboe or haeckelphone (although both these delightful instruments are available); in the military band often as many as 8 to 10 solo B-flat clarinets, 6 to 8 first B-flat clarinets, 4 second B-flat clarinets against 1 alto clarinet and 1 bass clarinet (or no alto and bass clarinets); glockenspiel used without bass-glockenspiel (metal marimba or vibraphone); xylophone used without bass-xylophone (wooden marimba). Everywhere the same tonal "top-heaviness"; which is, perhaps, not so surprising when we recall that the middle and lower parts of much 18th- and 19th-century music are as dull to play as they are boring to listen to. No wonder that players have been crowding the higher divisions of each instrumental family and that conductors have been permitting or encouraging them to do so!

It stands to reason that such crippled music-making, almost universally practised, distorts our notions of all pre-Haydn musical culture as surely as it warps the output of living composers. Wagner, it is true, was usually able, by dint of his phenomenal instinct for tone-values, to rectify in his orchestration the defects of the sound-bodies of his time. But his case is pretty well unique. Most composers cannot create musical perfection with imperfect musical tools, and there is no virtue in putting them to this uselessly severe test, the more so since the development of a consistently satisfying musical culture is at least as important as (in my opinion vastly more important than) the occasional creating of an isolated compositional masterpiece. In this connection we may with advantage apply to music Walt Whitman's dictum concerning literature: "Literature is great; but language is greater than literature."

As a result of this wholesale indifference to the first principles of serious music-making, our conductors, performers and music-lovers are, for the most part, well-nigh deaf to the appeal of the noblest and most spiritualizing type of music yet evolved—melodiously polyphonic music, whether old or new, whether "white" or "native." Solemn, angelically-mooded music is seldom heard in our concert halls, with the result that our musical public is undernourished in the higher musical experiences, while surfeited with the basest of musical appeals, that of rhythm.

What cure can be prescribed for all this slipshodness, ignorance and general "hardboiledness" that has descended upon our musical life as a result of nearly two hundred years of music-making under the sway of dance music and other popular music—two hundred years of divorce from the true traditions of art-music as they were practised before Bach, and as they always must be practised and

always *are* practised (whether in Europe, America, the Orient or the South Seas) wherever melodiously many-voiced music is upheld as a serious, lofty and spiritualizing art?

To offset this long-standing musical impoverishment, I would recommend a combination of the four following experiences:

1. Copious hearing of European art-music, from the earliest available examples up to and including Bach, given with the instruments, tonal proportions and traditions of the periods;
2. Repeated performances of the melodiously polyphonic masterpieces of modern music—such works as “The Song of the High Hills” by Delius, “Die junge Magd” by Hindemith, “The Seventh Quintet” by Arthur Fickenschner;
3. A study of the poly-melodic music of the Orient (Javanese Gamalan, etc.)<sup>6</sup> and of the native melodiously polyphonic music that is growing up in Madagascar,<sup>7</sup> the South Seas, etc., as a result of the blending of native and European musical cultures;
4. A serious study of the balance of tone and subtlety of scoring in the best jazz orchestras, such as Paul Whiteman’s and Duke Ellington’s.

\* \* \*

The first of these “cures” is provided, ready-made, by the genius and activities of Arnold Dolmetsch, who, for more than forty years has played the rôle of a musical Confucius, holding up to our ears the perfections of a great variety of ancient European music and preaching its value with persistence, yet without exaggeration or undue partisanship. If by the term “a genius” we mean one who has not allowed his great natural gifts to become narrowed and withered by specialization, but instead has kept a manly, full-blooded, all-round approach to art and life, then we must acclaim Arnold Dolmetsch as a genius indeed. From the very start of his artistic life he has shown a breadth and universality of vision, a combination of theoretical deduction with practical handicraft, a blend of æsthetic intuition with scientific fact-

<sup>6</sup>Gramophone records, “Musik des Orients” (Carl Lindström A. G., Kulturabteilung, Berlin S. O. 36), Nos. 9 and 10.

<sup>7</sup>Madagascar gramophone records, “Mampahory ny Masoanoro Seranin-Javona” (Chant Malgache 50-1597) and “Oay Lahy E” (Chant Malgache 50-1598), Disque “Gramophone” (French “His Master’s Voice”).

hunger and unbending truthfulness that it is truly breath-taking to review.<sup>8</sup>

Born of musically distinguished Bohemian, German, Swiss, and French forbears at Le Mans, Western France, in 1858, Arnold Dolmetsch had his early training in drawing, mathematics, physics and chemistry. On leaving school he entered the workshop of his father, who was a pianoforte maker. There he learned wood-working and piano-making, while with his grandfather he studied and practised the building and tuning of organs. His inborn passion for music-making soon drove him to study the violin, which he did under Vieuxtemps and others in Brussels and later at the Royal College of Music in London. Always alive to the charm of such older forms of European music as were then in circulation, he discovered in 1889, in the British Museum, an immense collection of English instrumental music of the 16th and 17th centuries. At once divining its vast importance—at a time when this type of music was contemptuously ignored by the musical authorities—Dolmetsch, with inspired insight, at once determined to play them on the instruments for which they were written and set about procuring viols, lutes, virginals and clavichords, repairing the old instruments as the need arose and training himself and other music-lovers to play upon them. From these beginnings he was led, step by step, into the tremendous scope of his eventual career—a career that has profoundly altered our conceptions of many phases of ancient European art-music, and which will, I am convinced, eventually radically affect the music and the musical life of the future. These many-sided activities included: the tireless examination of old manuscripts in libraries, museums, and elsewhere; the study of all discoverable treatises on the interpretation of ancient music; the collecting and repairing of old instruments; the making of clavichords, virginals, harpsichords, pianos (along his own original lines), lutes, viols, and other instruments for Chickering & Sons in Boston (1905-1911) and later for the firm of Gaveau in Paris (until 1914); the leading of his entire family to perform delightfully on all sorts of old instruments and to develop themselves as artist craftsmen and decorators in connection with the making of these instruments; the giving of many hundreds of lectures on, and programs of, ancient European art-music ranging from the 13th century to Mozart

<sup>8</sup>Two excellent accounts of this astounding life of vision and fruitfulness may be consulted with advantage: "Dolmetsch and his Instruments" (written by Dolmetsch himself in 1929) and "The Work and Ideas of Arnold Dolmetsch" by Robert Donington (1932). Both procurable from "The Dolmetsch Foundation," at the address already given.

(the performers sometimes attired in the dress of the period) in London, Boston, Paris and elsewhere; the publication of ancient music and books about it;<sup>9</sup> the training of children and grown folk to play together in groups along original, common-sense lines; and finally the crowning glory of the present activities of the entire Dolmetsch family at Haslemere, Surrey, England, where, for over a decade, harpsichords, virginals, spinets, clavichords, lutes, recorders, rebecs, viols, and other instruments (in many cases exquisitely decorated) are made with unrivalled artistry and bold experimentation at the Dolmetsch workshops, where young musicians are trained to play the old instruments with the old traditions, and where, each midsummer, a two-weeks festival of chamber music and dancing is held by the Dolmetsch family and some assistants, the like of which can be heard nowhere else in the world.

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At the original instigation of Robert Bridges, Sir Walford Davies, Sir Henry Hadow, Sir Richard Terry, Dr. W. G. Whitaker, Mr. W. J. Whittall and others, a Dolmetsch Foundation was formed at Haslemere, in 1927, to give financial support to the Dolmetsch workshops (which, by reason of the stubborn insistence on the highest attainable perfection at any cost practised there, naturally cannot be commercial) and to give to every phase of Dolmetsch's work and aims a more established position and wider influence—for instance, by the granting of scholarships to gifted young musicians capable of learning the Dolmetsch traditions and carrying them forward into the future.<sup>10</sup>

The Haslemere district is rightly famous for its rural charm, and this plays its part in creating that pleasant mixture of restfulness and liveliness that colours the whole festival experience. The festival concerts themselves are held in a quite small hall that is in every way ideal for the enjoyment of intimate chamber music.

The main instruments heard at the festival are:

Lute, Archlute, Theorbo etc.;

Complete family of Viols: Treble, Alto, Tenor, Bass ("Viola da Gamba"), Violone (Double-bass Viol) and Lyra (a smaller, variably tuned, Bass);

<sup>9</sup>Notably "The Interpretation of the Music of the XVIIth and XVIIIth Centuries," described on page 188.

<sup>10</sup>Members of the Foundation receive "The Consort," a journal containing valuable examples of the old music and information about it in articles by Arnold and Mabel Dolmetsch, W. G. Whittaker, Gerald Hayes, Sir Henry Hadow, C. Sanford Terry, Robert Donington and others. Those interested should apply to the Dolmetsch Foundation, West Street, Haslemere, Surrey, England.

Complete family of Violins: Treble, Viola, Tenor, 'Cello,  
Lyra da Braccio, Rebec;

Viola d'Amore, Viele, etc.;

Complete family of Recorders (English flutes or Flauti  
d'Echo): Sopranino, Discant, Treble, Tenor, Bass;

Choir of 24 Recorders; Oboe, Oboe d'Amore, Horn, Bassoon,  
Serpent, Shawm, Pipe and Tabour, etc.;

Keyboard Instruments: Chamber Organ, Harpsichord,  
the Virginals (or Spinnet), Clavichord.

The seven members of the Dolmetsch family have so spread their talents as musical performers over most of the instruments above mentioned, that they can at any moment render a consort of viols, or a consort of the complete violin family, or a consort of recorders without outside assistance—thereby rivalling the musical accomplishments of the family of Johann Sebastian Bach.

The wonderful playing of Arnold and Rudolph Dolmetsch on the clavichord, the virginals and harpsichord is, I suppose, too well-known from gramophone records<sup>11</sup> to need describing here. Their eye-opening Bach-renderings delight with wayward *rubati*, sparkling high speeds and vivid contrasts of *staccato* and *legato* so welcomingly different from the "bagpipe style of Bach playing" wittily ridiculed by Dolmetsch. Unforgettable are the pure-toned sonorities of the recorder consorts. These instruments produce a richer, less windy, tone than the modern flute and bear for my ears at least, a certain likeness to boy's voices. When they play music in several parts, the voice-movements seem to stand out with unwonted clearness and impressiveness. The singing of Cécile Dolmetsch is an experience to warm the heart of every sensitive musician. Hers is a *naturally* produced voice (as different from that of the conventional concert singer as is a folk-singer's—though different again from this), fresh in all its original girlish lightness and humanity, but used, of course, with high musical skill, consciousness and conscientiousness.<sup>12</sup>

No less potent than the actual sounds produced by the Dolmetsch family is the mood that lies behind their musical teamwork—the serious joyousness, the informality of it all. They have entirely recaptured the spirit of seventeenth-century music-

<sup>11</sup>"The Columbia History of Music for Ear and Eye." Arnold Dolmetsch is at present recording his playing of the entire "Well-Tempered Clavier," and the "Chromatic Fantasia" on the clavichord for the Columbia Graphophone Company. Those interested in these records should apply to the "Forty-eight" Society, 98 Clerkenwell Road, London, E.C.1. The first album, containing seven double-faced records, is now available.

<sup>12</sup>A good gramophone record of her singing may be heard in the 1st album of "The Columbia History of Music for Ear and Eye."

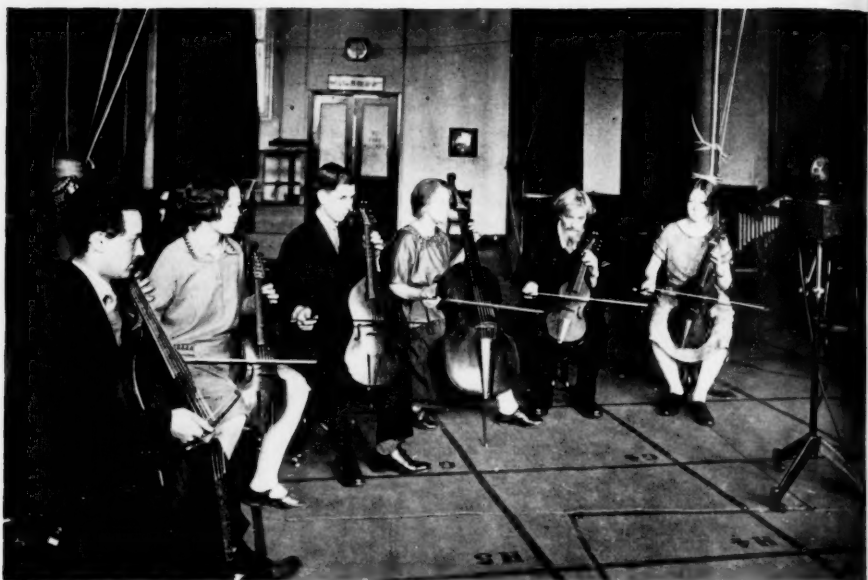




Arnold Dolmetsch



Rudolph Dolmetsch (viola da gamba)  
and Arnold Dolmetsch (lute)



Rudolph Dolmetsch (bass viol), Cécile Dolmetsch (treble viol), Carl Dolmetsch (tenor viol), Mrs. Dolmetsch (bass viol), Arnold Dolmetsch (treble viol), Nathalie Dolmetsch (tenor viol)



Arnold Dolmetsch, his family and some of his assistants

Instruments, front row: lute, cithern, archlute or theorbo, little medieval harp with brass strings, descant recorder; back row: bass recorder, tenor recorder, serpent, rebec, bass viol

making in the home. Dolmetsch is not above stopping in the middle of a number, if all does not go to his liking, and beginning again, after having embellished the occasion with some kindly argument. He is not above chiding late-comers amongst his audience (reminding them that "punctuality is the courtesy of Kings") although himself quite capable of starting his programs well over-time. In short, he is intimate, natural, affectionate, inconsistent, wilful and tyrannical—as we like truly great and sincere beings to be.

Of the vast, varied mass of ancient music and dances—classical and popular, religious and profane—performed at the Haslemere Chamber Music Festivals from 1925 to 1932 (inclusive) the following may be singled out as having special significance:

*English Songs and Dances*, from medieval times up to and including Purcell, for all kinds of solo instruments (such as the lute and the keyboard instruments), for "consorts" of several instruments of one family and for "broken consorts" (blends of instruments of different families);

*English Intimate Music*, especially the Fantasies and other compositions for 4, 5 or 6 Viols by such 16th- and 17th-century composers as William Byrd, G. Coperario (John Cooper), Richard Deering, John Dowland, Michael Easte, John Jenkins, William Lawes, Matthew Locke, Thomas Morley, Martin Pierson, Thomas Tomkins, Thomas Weelkes;

*Early Spanish Music* (13th to 16th century), especially the Fantasies for Viols by Francisco de Peñalosa, Antonio de Cabeçon and Diego Ortiz, and the strangely archaic song for voice and lute by Diego Pisador (C. 1550) entitled "Paseábase el Rey Moro";

*Early French Music*, from the 13th to the 18th century, featuring chiefly such composers as Couperin, d'Anglebert, the Forquerays, J.-M. Leclair, Marin Marais, Mondonville, Rameau, and including the Court Music of Louis XIII, XIV and XV (part of this latter played by 24 violins corresponding to "les vingt-quatre Violons du Roy" of the Louis XIII epoch);

*Early Italian Music*, including the remarkable "Scherzi Musicali" for voices and instruments by Claudio Monteverdi;

*Early German Music* by such composers as D. Funck, Johann Kuhnau, August Kühnel, R. T. Mayer and G. P. Telemann;

*Bach programs*, covering the whole range of Bach's muse from the "Comic Cantata" to the "Passions," copiously presenting the variously scored concertos (which are a revelation when heard on the original instruments) and clearly stressing the basic difference between the clavicord compositions (Chromatic Fantasia, Well-

Tempered Clavier) and the harpsichord works (French and English Suites, Goldberg Variations, Italian Concerto);

*Haydn and Mozart programs;*

*Festival Dances (and other Dances) of Italy, Spain, France, and England*, researched and revived by Mabel (Mrs. Arnold) Dolmetsch and performed by "The Renaissance Dancers" trained by her.

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I shall pass by the impressions made by all the other kinds of music performed in order to dwell upon what, for me, is the major experience of the festivals—the soul-stirring renderings of the matchless English Fantasies<sup>13</sup> for Viols. Dolmetsch is not exaggerating when he describes these compositions as being "the highest summit of pure music." I have no hesitation in saying that they are as superior to all other compositions for any type of stringed instruments (for instance, the string quartets of Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Brahms) as the piano writing of Chopin is superior to all other piano writing, as the orchestral style of Wagner is superior to all other orchestral styles. There is, after all, such a thing as the perfect use of a medium, and it seems to me very important that we should not neglect to recognize perfection in art when we find it—without denying, however, that imperfect art (with, for instance, an imperfect adjustment of the outer medium to the inner inspiration) also may have its great—though lesser—value. These Fantasies are as polyphonically melodious, in their own instrumental way, as are the vocal perfections of Palestrina. They do not suffer, as does so much string-writing of later periods, from being orchestrally or pianistically conceived. Above all, they unfold the angelic mood, the sustained rapture, the complexity of musical thought, the glowing sonority, the breadth of form-flow so native to the strings. Furthermore, they are blessedly devoid of all that "humor" (a quality always incompatible with real music, I find), "comic relief" and displayfulness that mars so much post-Bach chamber-music. The English Fantasies were not written for hungry professional musicians always in need of pushing forward their tiresome skill and personality; they

<sup>13</sup>Of all the Fantasies for Viols that I have heard, the Fantasy and Air in G minor by William Lawes (died 1645) strikes me as the most notable for its unusual combination of diverse qualities—broad flow of form, complexity of polyphonic and harmonic texture, emotional poignancy, harsh discordance, surging sonority and strong personal originality. A facsimile of the last two pages (containing a passage of surprising beauty and dissonance) of this composition, as scored by Arnold Dolmetsch (in his own handwriting) from the original manuscript, will be found facing page 187.

were created for the delight of music-loving, leisured amateurs who wanted to *play* music in groups rather than *practise* "technic" in single wretchedness. Therefore these Fantasies are ideally fitted to the needs of high-school musicians and all the other jolly and sensible groups of younger and older amateur musicians that are springing up everywhere in American musical life and are the comfort of all well-wishers of music.

But these chamber-music masterpieces must be played on the instruments they were written for—the viols—and not on members of the violin family. The less noisy, yet more "edgy," tone-quality of the thinner-strung viols enables the intricate voice-leading of these often highly polyphonic compositions to "tell" with an obviously superior ease.

In a few years there will be a universal stampede in the direction of these pre-Bach consorts for viols. It is as easy to foretell this to-day—on the grounds that *the finest*, in any line, always makes its mark—as it was to foresee in 1890 the coming popularity of Bach, or in 1906 to foresee the pending vogue of Delius. In the meantime Arnold Dolmetsch, who above all men knows the secrets of this and other ancient European art-music, is 75 years of age. The obviously sensible thing to do, for all forward-looking musicians who can manage it, is to emigrate to Haslemere<sup>14</sup> and learn there the Dolmetsch traditions from their fountain-head while they yet may! Why go to Bayreuth or Salzburg to rehash traditions already familiar to all normally equipped musicians? Is it not more important to acquire knowledge of that vast body of shamefully neglected traditions concerning almost every phase of older music unearthed and made living by Dolmetsch that so soon will become a *necessity* to every self-respecting musician?

I can think of nothing that could be more fructifying to me, personally, as a composer, pianist and music-maker generally, than to spend some years under the Dolmetsch tutelage; and I say this as one who is not primarily interested in ancient music as such, but as one whose hopes and interests are concerned with the music of the future. I believe that the music of the future will be more soul-satisfying—more melodious, more many-voiced, more complex, more rapturous, more angelic in mood—than any music of the past. But I feel that the best training for future musical-perfection lies in at least some working knowledge of those past periods of musical culture that possessed some real perfection.

<sup>14</sup>The next Dolmetsch festival at Haslemere will take place from July 17th to July 30th (inclusive), 1933. Those desirous of attending the festival should write early to the Secretary of the Haslemere Festival, "Jesses," Haslemere, Surrey, England, for information regarding programs, tickets, hotels, boarding-houses, reduced railroad-fares, etc. Haslemere is a little over an hour's run by train from London.

In the case of those unlucky enough not to be able to visit Haslemere, I recommend a perusal of Dolmetsch's epoch-making book, "The Interpretation of the Music of the XVII and XVIII Centuries."<sup>15</sup> This closely-packed volume, with its appendix of invaluable musical illustrations, is the outcome of a life-time of inspired investigation and correlation of a myriad neglected facts and contains a mine of information for all musicians—be they singers, instrumentalists or conductors—concerned with any music older than Beethoven's. What conscientious musician, reading this handbook of hitherto lost tradition for the first time, can fail to blush as he realizes the gross errors in style, ornamentation, tempo, rhythm and other details he has inevitably committed when performing the works of any of the older masters?<sup>16</sup>

I will close with some statements by Arnold Dolmetsch—culled from his various writings—that seem to me typical of their author's wisdom, insight and far-sight:

"No art can develop healthily unless grounded upon a real, direct comprehension of the achievement of past generations. The neglect of this truth is the principal cause of the futile striving after originality and the misguided experiments which have brought music to its present chaos."

[In estimating pre-Bach music] "We should take warning from the 18th-century connoisseurs, who declared Gothic architecture barbarous, or the early 19th-century art critics, who could see no beauty in pre-Raphaelite art."

"Should not modern musicians treat the works of their masters as they wish their own may be treated in future centuries? Yes, but the unreasoned conviction of their own superiority obscures their mind. . . . We can no longer allow anyone to stand between us and the composer."

<sup>15</sup>Novello & Co., London (U. S. agents, The H. W. Gray Co., New York).

<sup>16</sup>Note the amusing example of the *Meistersinger* "Preislied," misinterpreted as we misinterpret most older music, presented on page 109 of the *op. cit.*



## THE FADO

(THE PORTUGUESE SONG OF FATE)

By RODNEY GALLOP

“THE *fado*, the knife and the guitar,” writes Pinto de Carvalho, “are the three favourites adored by the people of Lisbon.”<sup>1</sup> If the foreign visitor to Portugal’s capital is likely to be disappointed in any hopes he may entertain of seeing the second member of this trio at work, he will find the other two more easily accessible.

Although there are several well-known *boîtes de nuit* where the *fado* is sung to an audience drawn principally from the demi-monde, it is better heard in simpler, more plebeian surroundings. Its true home is Alfama and Mouraria, the poor quarters of the city, which flaunt their picturesque squalor on the slopes below St. George’s Castle. A walk through these steep, narrow streets on a moonlit night is likely to be rewarded with the sound of a guitar and the mournful cadences of the *triste canção do sul*. But to hold it surely in one’s grasp it is best to go to one of the popular cafés such as the “Luso” and the “Victoria” where it is regularly performed by semi-professional *fadistas*.

The social standing of these places seems to be largely a matter of headgear. Entrance to the first is forbidden to those wearing caps or bérêts (a fine distinction). The patrons of the second, on the other hand, many of whom are seafaring folk, seem to wear no other head-covering. The spacious rectangle of the “Luso” and the low-vaulted room of the “Victoria” are alike crowded with tables and chairs at which many men (but few women) sit drinking coffee, beer, or soft drinks with exotic names such as Maracuja or Guarana. Presently the lights are lowered and turn red, and a woman steps on to a low platform at one side of the room. She is the singer. Her accompanists, who seat themselves on chairs in front of her, are armed with guitars of two different types, known the one as a *guitarra* and the other as a *viola da França*. The Portuguese apply the name of *guitarra* to an instrument with a rounded soundboard and six double strings of wire. The *viola da França*, on the other hand, is but another name for the familiar Spanish guitar. The tune of the *fado*, or figured variations upon it, is played on the former instrument with its

<sup>1</sup>Historia do Fado, Lisbon, 1903.

sweeter, more silvery tone, while the latter is used to provide a thrumming accompaniment, alternating invariably between the chords of the tonic and the dominant seventh.

After a few bars of this accompaniment the *fadista* begins her song. With head thrown back, eyes half closed, ecstatic expression and body swaying slightly to the rhythm of the music, she sings in the curiously rough, untrained voice and simple, unpretentious manner which are dictated by tradition. The *fado* does not lend itself to *bel canto*, and the opera singer with his cultivated voice and professional manner would never be tolerated by the critical audience that listens in unbroken silence to these songs. Against the strict common time of her accompaniment the *fadista* maintains a rhythm as free and flexible as that of the jazz-singer, with whom she shares certain tricks of syncopation and suspension of the rhythmic beat which give the song a lilt as fascinating as it is difficult to reproduce.

Leaving aside all technical considerations, it is difficult to put into words the very individual character of the *fado*. Epithets crowd into the mind, all appropriate up to a point, yet many of them mutually contradictory, and none of them conveying the exact and complete impression that one strives in vain to seize and to evoke.

The true *fado* is always sad. Usually in the minor, it retains even in the major the melancholy character associated with the minor. It may be wild, finely exultant in its sadness, seeming to revel in tragedy; or, more often, striking a note of pathetic and almost languid resignation. Its sophisticated cadences breathe a spirit of theatrical self-pity combined with genuine sincerity. It is emotional, passionate, erotic, sensuous, one might say meretricious, and yet, like some rustic courtesan, fundamentally simple and unpretentious. Perhaps this is because these qualities, however irreconcilable to the Anglo-Saxon way of thinking, are nevertheless reconciled in the Portuguese temperament, or at least in one aspect of it.

"Both words and music," writes Pinto de Carvalho, "reflect the abrupt turns of fickle Fortune, the evil destiny of the unfortunate, the irony of fate, the piercing pangs of love, the poignancy of absence or despair, the profound sobs of discouragement, the sorrows of *saudade*, the caprices of the heart, and those ineffable moments when the souls of lovers descend to their lips and, before flying back on high, hover for an instant in a sweet embrace."

This analysis leaves little more to be said. And it is all the more surprising that the merits of the *fado* are as hotly disputed

by some Portuguese writers as they are loudly proclaimed by others.

On the one hand, Ventura de Abrandes, writing in the "Guerra de Portugal" describes these as "the most Portuguese of all songs and the liturgy of the nation's soul." And the honour of having given them birth is disputed in the columns of the daily press by Lisbon and Coimbra, the old university city on the banks of the Mondego, where the black-gowned students stroll through the narrow streets on moonlight nights twanging their guitars and singing serenades to shadowed casement windows.

On the other hand there is no lack of those who are violent in their condemnation of what Adolfo Pimentel calls "those deliquescent and immoral melodies."<sup>2</sup>

"There is nothing in this order of things," writes A. Arroio, "which can be compared with the *fado* as an expression of the lowest type of melodrama and of the most exaggeratedly bad taste."<sup>3</sup> José Maciel Ribeiro Fortes goes so far as to stigmatize it as "a song of rogues, a hymn to crime, an ode to vice, an encouragement to moral depravity . . . an unhealthy emanation from the centres of corruption, from the infamous habitations of the scum of society."<sup>4</sup>

This virulent antagonism is perhaps to be explained in part by resentment at the manner in which foreigners, and indeed many Portuguese, have accepted the *fado* as the only popular musical expression of the Portuguese nation. It is a curious fact that, as Adolfo Salazar wrote some years ago in an article in "El Sol," "that which is considered to be typical of a country, and which even the inhabitants themselves admit to be characteristic (*castizo*) is apt to be of the most recent importation and the least traditional thing in the world." Of the truth of this statement a hundred examples spring to the mind: the *zortzikos* of the Basques, for instance, the *tzigane* music of Hungary and the many melodies which pass for Scotch or Irish. Its application to the *fado* is in the main justified. For the latter is very different from the true peasant folk-song of Portugal.

Salazar's words "of recent importation" are worth bearing in mind. The word *fado* is not used in Portuguese literature in the sense of a song until 1833 when the two terms *fado* and *fadista* make a simultaneous appearance in a broadsheet:

<sup>2</sup>Triste canção do sul, Lisbon, 1904.

<sup>3</sup>A Canta coral e a sua função social.

<sup>4</sup>O Fado, Oporto, 1926.

*Dansamos também o Fado por ser dança muito guapa  
E tomamos um fadista que sabe jogar à faca.<sup>5</sup>*

Both words are undoubtedly derived from the Latin *fatum* (fate) and seem to have been first used in connection with the notorious bad characters of the worst quarters of Lisbon, who enjoyed a monopoly of the song until about 1870, when it began to acquire a wider popularity. It may be that the word *fado* was first applied to the songs in which these rogues lamented their evil destiny. On the other hand, it is possible that their very destiny had already earned them the appellation of *fadistas*, and that the term was only subsequently extended to their songs. "The *fadista*," writes Pinto de Carvalho, "who played the rôle filled to-day by the Parisian *voyou* and the American 'rough' . . . was the product of all the vices and the incarnation of everything despicable." His modern prototype is a Bohemian of a gentler order. Be that as it may, the problem whether the song took its name from the singer, or the latter from the song will probably never be solved. The more so since recent research has revealed that the word is found in Brazil as early as 1819. For this and for other reasons the possibility cannot be excluded that the name or the song or both came to Portugal from Brazil.

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The question of the origin of the *fado*, like that of its merits, has long been a subject of learned, and correspondingly acrimonious, controversy. The brilliant but erratic Theófilo Braga claimed for it a Moorish origin,<sup>6</sup> and this theory finds rather surprising support in Edmundo Arménio Correia Lopes, who sees not only in the *fado* but also in the Spanish *tango* and *habanera* the direct descendants of the Arabian *majuri*.<sup>7</sup> Apart from internal evidence (for the *fado* is anything but Moorish in character) this theory is rendered inherently improbable by the fact that neither in Andalusia, nor in the Algarve, where the Moors remained longer than in other parts of the Iberian Peninsula, is the *fado* or any kindred form indigenous. Other writers have sought its birthplace on the high seas. "In my opinion," writes Pinto de Carvalho, "the *fado* is of maritime origin, an origin which is confirmed by its rhythm, undulating as the cadenced movements of the wave, regular as

<sup>5</sup>We dance the *fado* for the fine dance that it is  
And we take a *fadista* who knows how to use his knife.

<sup>6</sup>O Povo português nos seus costumes, crenças e tradições.

<sup>7</sup>Cancioneirinho de Fozcoa, Coimbra, 1926.

the heaving of a ship . . . or as the beating of waves upon the shore." Ventura de Abrantes combines this theory with that of a peasant origin: "The real creators of the *fado* were the sailors, soldiers and country folk. They it was who, on their journeys beyond the seas, on their high adventures of discovery, far from the land which gave them birth, and in order not to forget their great love for it, sang the *fado* to express their *saudades* and their longing to return." Professor Sampaio prefers to derive it from the innumerable variants of a single Portuguese folk-song, that to which the peasants dance round the bonfires on St. John's Eve. This theory cannot be accepted as it stands, although there is a grain of substance in it, of which it will be convenient to defer consideration for the present.

The hypothesis which finds most credence among musical circles in Portugal is one which has far more arguments in its favour. It is impossible to conceive the *fado* without a guitar accompaniment, and its origins therefore can hardly be sought in an environment where that instrument was not cultivated. "The *fado* and the guitar," writes Luis de Freitas Branco, "have no definite regional character in our countryside. They are characteristic of the populace of the great cities, and in particular of Lisbon."<sup>8</sup> The guitar is, of course, descended from an instrument introduced into the Peninsula by the Moors and adopted by the mediæval minstrels under the name of *vihuela*. It formed one member of the trio (the others were tea and toast) introduced into England by Catherine of Braganza on her marriage to Charles II, and became so popular that the English were soon exporting guitars to Portugal, a circumstance which has led one Portuguese musical historian to the ill-advised conclusion that the English were the inventors of the Portuguese guitar.

Since songs and dances to the accompaniment of the guitar clearly existed in Lisbon long before the name of the *fado* was heard, it seems reasonable to seek the immediate sources of the latter in the popular music of Lisbon during the period preceding its appearance. There are fortunately a number of descriptions and references which afford a fairly clear picture of the music of Lisbon during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Owing to its geographical position and to its importance both as a port and as a capital, the city has always been particularly receptive to exotic influences and, as is generally admitted, to the admixture of foreign, even non-European, blood. Since the great epoch of discovery and colonization during the first half

<sup>8</sup>A Música em Portugal, Lisbon, 1930.

of the sixteenth century the *lisboeta* has always shown a marked liking for exotic song and dance, and in particular for those of the negroid races with which the Portuguese came into contact in Africa, and whom they transplanted as slaves not only to Brazil, but also to extensive regions in Southern Portugal which had been left empty first by the Moors and later by the American colonists.

The literature of the last three hundred years is full of references to such exotic dances. The earliest in point of time is the *batuque* which seems to have become popular in Lisbon in the sixteenth century. Others are the *oitavado* and the *arrepia*, both of which are mentioned in 1734, the *guineo* from Guinea, the *arromba* accompanied by the Spanish guitar and the slapping of thighs, the *zabel macau*, the *charamba*, the *sarembegue*, the *chegança*, the *canario* "danced with many difficult postures and great gravity," the *fôfa* and the *lundum*. Like so many native dances, most of these appear to have been rather lascivious and obscene in nature. It was doubtless their exotic character which appealed to the creole Joséphine Beauharnais, who, on seeing them danced in 1808 by Portuguese soldiers at Bayonne, is said to have exclaimed: "Oh, how I love these Portuguese gavottes!" Under King Manuel I, a law was promulgated proscribing *batuques*, *charambas* and *lundums*, and the accounts of contemporary travellers leave little doubt of their character.

In 1761 the black slaves in Portugal were liberated, and many of them established themselves in the Alfama quarter of Lisbon, a fact which may have contributed to the extraordinary popularity enjoyed by the *fôfa* towards the end of the eighteenth century. Dezoteux has left the following account of this dance: "The people ran about here and there singing and dancing the *fôfa*, a sort of national dance performed in pairs to the accompaniment of the guitar or some other instrument; a dance so lascivious that decency blushes at witnessing it, and I would not dare to describe it."<sup>9</sup> Dalrymple, before whom it was danced by a coloured man and woman in 1774, calls it "the dance peculiar to Portugal as the *fandango* is to Spain . . . the most indecent thing I ever saw."

Like the *fado* in its older form, the *fôfa* was thus danced, as well as sung, to a guitar accompaniment. But more important, from the point of view of the "fadographic problem the vastness and complexity of which would furnish abundant materials for two fat volumes,"<sup>10</sup> is the *lundum* which, together with the *modinha*, shared the affections of the Lisbon populace from the last quarter

<sup>9</sup>Voyage en Portugal.

<sup>10</sup>Fortes, *op. cit.*



of the eighteenth to the middle of the nineteenth century. The *lundum* came to Portugal from Brazil. "It is of American origin," writes José Maria de Andrade Ferreira, "and often recalls the songs of Peru in its languidness and its gentle meanderings which reflect the indolence of those countries devoured by the heat of a burning sun."<sup>11</sup> It seems certain, however, that it was in reality brought to Brazil from the west coast of Africa. Adolfo Pimentel writes of "the languid and monotonous song of the African native whence appears to have come the *lundum* which accorded with our innate melancholy and was certainly the popular song most closely related to the modern *fado*." The reference of the satirical poet Nicolau Tolentino de Almeida to the *doce lundum chorado* (sweetly weeping *lundum*) coupled with an old print showing a "fadista dancing the *lundum*" suggest that this dance possessed the regular rhythm and the languorous, indolent lilt of the modern *fado*.

During the reigns of João V, José I and Maria I, that is to say throughout the middle section of the eighteenth century, "the people of Lisbon danced the *lundum* to the sound of the guitar" according to Carlos Malheiro Dias.<sup>12</sup> But it was not long before its character was modified by contact with the *modinha*, defined by Ernesto Vieira as "a sad and sentimental melody often in the minor." The two forms were equally popular in Lisbon, and Eduardo Noronha's assertion that the *fado* "must have had the *lundum* for father and the *modinha* for mother" is thus expounded by Adolfo Pimentel:—"The national plays performed in the Salitre and Rua dos Condes Theatres contained Italian music, the most catchy airs of which became public property and were transformed into the *modas* or *modinhas* which radiated all over the country. There was even a periodical devoted to *modinhas* which published the most interesting of them. In these pieces were also interpolated *lundums*, African dances which served as interludes. Gradually the *lundum* began to take on an independent existence as a song which rapidly became the favourite of the lowest grades of society who gave it the name of *fado*."

That the dance of the *fado* was almost identical with that of the *lundum* as performed in Portugal is suggested by a passage from one of the *Improvisos* of Falmeno (Felisberto Inácio Januário Cordeiro) who in a foot-note on the dances of Brazil, writes that "*fado, tacorá* . . . are the names of Brazilian dances corresponding

<sup>11</sup>Curso de literatura portuguesa, Lisbon, 1875.

<sup>12</sup>Cartas de Lisboa, Lisbon, 1905.

to those which in Portugal are called *lundum*, *fandango*, *fôfa*, *chula*, etc."

There is nothing inherently improbable in the suggestion that the *fado* is a sort of musical half-breed, heir to the rhythmic features of one parent and the melodic features of the other. For the negro spirituals of the United States have been shown to be the product of African rhythms and European hymn-tunes; and the tango, maxixe and other dances of Latin America combine the steady monotonous beat and indolent syncopation of the coloured races with the formal symmetry and sophisticated line of European art-music.

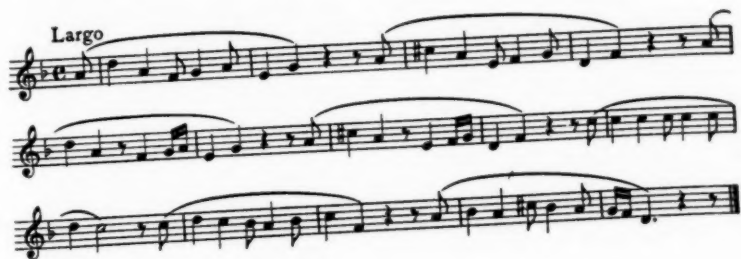
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The analogies which, in spite of wide differences, undoubtedly exist between the *fado* and certain Portuguese country-songs still remain to be accounted for, and to this end the internal evidence offered by the *fado* itself must be taken into consideration. It may therefore be of value to quote a few examples taken down either directly or through the medium of the gramophone from authentic singers in Lisbon and Coimbra:



# The Fado

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With these examples in mind it is now possible to attempt a definition of the *fado*, incidentally excluding from it many types of song to which popular misconception has applied the name. The true *fado* is the combination of a rhythm, a type of melody, and a style, or rather two distinct styles, of singing.

According to Ernesto Vieira the *fado* consists of "sections of eight bars in 2/4 time, divided equally and symmetrically into two halves each consisting of two phrases." Apart from the fact that it is usually found more convenient to transcribe the *fado* in 4/4 than in 2/4 time, this definition is accurate enough as far as it goes. But it could equally be applied to many of the rural dance-songs, and takes no account of the fundamental and characteristic rhythm of the phrase which is this:



It is this touch of syncopation, common to almost every *fado*, on which Dr. Sampaio bases his claim, alluded to above, that the *fado* is derived from the *cantigas de São João*, the songs sung by the Portuguese peasantry round the Midsummer bonfires. Here is one of these songs taken down by the writer in Central Portugal:



This is not, however, the only example of this rhythm found in the country music. There are several others in the Pedro Fernandes Thomás collection,<sup>13</sup> and it is significant that in each case the collector was informed by the singer that the song was of Brazilian origin. It seems, therefore, that this feature is a Brazilian (i.e. originally African) contribution to the composition of the

<sup>13</sup>Velhas canções e romances populares portugueses, Coimbra, 1913.

*fado*. Its introduction into a simple rural dance-song such as that to which the young men of Vila Franca do Rosario sing their annual mumming play at Carnival:



would suffice to give the latter all the character of the *fado*:



The regular beat of the rhythm, the formal symmetry of the structure, the falling cadences, the weak final accent—all these are common to both *fado* and country-song.

From the melodic point of view the most striking quality of the *fado* is its obviousness and its often banal facility. The instrumental accompaniment is limited to the chords of the tonic and dominant seventh (with an occasional modulation in the more modern examples to the same chords in the key of the dominant), and the melody is founded on, and limited by, this preëxisting harmonic scheme. Many of the rural dance-songs, the *viras* in particular, are similarly founded on an harmonic basis, but they contrive usually to be more melodic in character than the *fados*, some of which are inconceivable, and indeed almost unsingable, apart from their accompaniment. That this harmonic scheme is older than the tunes is proved by the fact that it has been shown to have existed in the time of Catherine of Braganza, and to have been brought by her retinue to the court of Charles II; for it is found, with almost the modern guitar figuration, in a piece for harpsichord by an English composer of that period.

So far, therefore, the *fado* has been shown to be the product of a Portuguese rhythm, an exotic lilt derived from negro syncopation, and an elementary harmonic system. On this foundation the people of Lisbon sang tunes of the type congenial to them, some of which, perhaps, may have been akin to peasant songs, but most of which must have been derived, to judge from their sophisticated cadences, from street music and the echoes of Italian opera.

This would account both for the occasional analogies to be found between both branches of Portuguese folk-song, the urban

and the rural, and for the still greater difference of spirit which separates them, and which becomes still more marked in the manner of their singing.

Some account has already been given of the mannerisms of the Lisbon *fadista*. Its most characteristic ingredient is the flexibility of the rhythm, a free rubato over the steady beat of the accompaniment, which it is extremely difficult to seize or to transcribe, and to which staff-notation imparts a rigidity the lack of which is its principal charm. The syncopated half-bar



is turned into a languorous triplet



or into something between the two. The subtle rhythmic inflections vary from verse to verse, and, like plain-song, though in a different way, the tune moulds itself to the plastic form of the words. So closely do these rhythmic mannerisms—together with the easy, intimate manner and the throaty, almost hoarse voice—resemble the style of the authentic jazz singer, that one is tempted to see in them a further negro legacy to the *fado*.

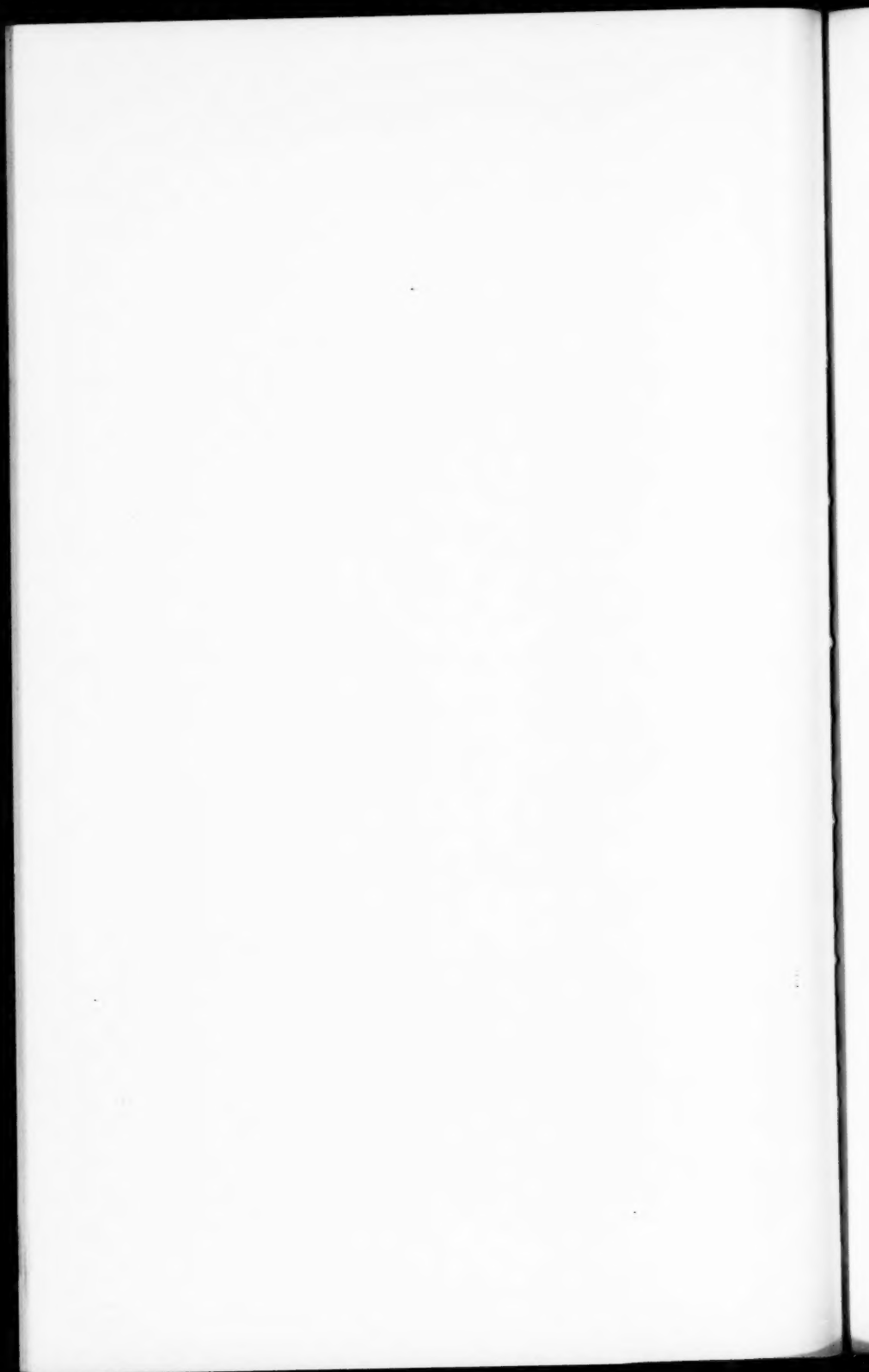
At Coimbra the *fado* has a very different character. Here it is no longer the song of the common people. It has become the property of the students who wander along the green banks of the Mondego, among the poplars of the *Choupal*, dreamily singing to their silvery guitars. Their clear, warm tenor voices give the song a character that is more refined, more sentimental, in a word more aristocratic. At Coimbra the *fado* seems to be divorced from every-day realities and cares and to express a vague romantic yearning which is in keeping with the atmosphere of the ancient university city. It is the song of those who still retain and cherish their illusions, not of those who have irretrievably lost them. But it is less individual and distinctive, more akin to the serenades of other parts of Southern Europe than is the *fado de Lisboa*. This impression is heightened in the stylized *fados* of Antonio Menano, the merits of which are a bone of contention among Portuguese musicians.

It must not be thought, however, that the *fado*, being a fusion of elements not all of Portuguese origin, and being as much "popular" as "folk" in character, is æsthetically valueless. There are, of course, any number of so-called *fados* composed to be sung





A Fado in the Street



in revues or warbled in drawing-rooms by sentimental *meninas*. And, incidentally, it is exclusively these which find their way into print. The tunes to which the authentic *fados* are sung have never, to the writer's knowledge, been taken down, although, curiously enough, there are excellent gramophone records of many of them. It is difficult to fix the age of these anonymous tunes; but usually they are older than the words sung to them, since the *fadistas* have a great facility for improvising verses, which, however, they generally sing to old and well-worn tunes. Even when they compose their own tunes, these are in no sense an expression of the composer's individuality, but are rather the outcome of their environment and determined by a gradually-formed and well-defined tradition. They are the spontaneous music of the plebeian populace of Lisbon, just as much as the folk-songs are that of the peasants, and, like the *chansons vécues* of the French artisan, may perhaps most fairly be defined as "urban folk-song."

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However little the *fado* may have in common with the folk-songs of the countryside, it is no less Portuguese in spirit than these latter, with which it shares the gift of expressing one of the most marked traits of Portuguese character. "There is indeed," writes Armando Leça, "a definite connection between the melting sadness of the *fado* and a certain amorous and sentimental fatalism fairly common in our race."<sup>14</sup> In Portuguese this quality is best expressed by the word *saudades* which has no exact equivalent in any other language. To a musician a well-sung *fado choradinho* will offer a better interpretation of this word than any verbal explanation, but it may profitably be supplemented by a passage from Aubrey Bell's "In Portugal": "The famous *saudade* of the Portuguese is a vague and constant desire for something that does not and probably cannot exist, for something other than the present, a turning towards the past or towards the future; not an active discontent or poignant sadness, but an indolent dreaming wistfulness."<sup>15</sup> In a word *saudade* is yearning: yearning for something so indefinite as to be indefinable: an unrestrained indulgence in yearning. It is a blend of German *Sehnsucht*, French *nostalgie*, and something else besides. It couples the vague longing of the Celt for the unattainable, with a Latin sense of reality which

<sup>14</sup>Da Música portuguesa, Lisbon, 1922.

<sup>15</sup>In Portugal, London, 1912.

induces realization that it is indeed unattainable, and with the resultant discouragement and resignation. All this is implied in the lilting measures of the *fado*, in its languid triplets and syn-copations and, above all, in its descending and, as it were, drooping cadences.

That the *fado* is faithful to the national character or rather to one side of it, is shown by the way in which it has prospered when transplanted to the foreign soil of Oporto, and by the popularity which it has won in the countryside, where, like some fast-growing weed, it has choked and stifled the wild-flowers of peasant song.

If further proof be needed, it is afforded by the hold which the story of Severa, or rather her legend, has taken of the popular imagination. Maria Severa, greatest of all *fadistas*, was the daughter of a woman known as *A Barbuda* (The Bearded Lady) who kept a tavern in Madragoa, the fishwives' quarter of Lisbon. Somewhere about 1840, mother and daughter moved to the Mouraria and established themselves in the Rua do Caplão, which its unenviable reputation had earned the nickname of Rua Suja. From her mother, Severa learned to sing and dance (*bater*) the *fado*. Her moral upbringing went no further; and, like the Maid of Amsterdam, she was soon "mistress of her trade." Living in the atmosphere which engendered the *fado*, she soon became its most renowned exponent. Her first lover, a man of her own class, was banished to Africa for a *crime passionel*. Handsome, passionate, violent, in all things immoderate, she attracted the attention of a bull-fighting aristocrat with a taste for low life, the Conde de Vimioso (not, as Julio Dantas has it, the Conde de Marialva). The tempestuous love-affair between these two, of which the sentimental aspect has blinded the Portuguese to its more sordid side, is still sung in many *fados* and forms the foundation on which Julio Dantas has woven a story which, as play, novel and sound-film, has won widespread popularity. In this story Severa dies, like Mimi in *La Bohème*, of consumption. But popular tradition maintains stoutly, and more appropriately if less romantically, that the real cause of her death was a surfeit of pigeon and red wine.

No mention has yet been made of the words of these songs, and in truth they are of little value or interest. The poems improvised by the *fadistas* are composed in verses of four, five, eight or ten lines. A very usual form is that of the *glosa*, based on a quatrain, sometimes of popular origin, each line of which is taken in turn to form the last line of an eight-line verse. Full of exaggerated sentimentality, wallowing in self-pity, they have the poverty

of expression and the hackneyed turn of phrase commonly associated with greeting cards. Many of them extol the joys of being unhappy and of expressing one's wretchedness through the medium of *fado* and guitar. Others relate long and doleful tales of blighted love, conjugal infidelity or misfortune piled upon misfortune. One that I heard was a sort of rhymed sermon on pacifism, ending up with an assertion by the singer that he had been inspired to compose it by seeing the film "All Quiet on the Western Front" at the São Luis Cinema. Another, exquisite in its bathos, described a bicycle race round Portugal, while a third, a lament for a footballer named Pepe (rhymed with *crêpe*), exclaimed:

*Foi um astro, foi um sol,  
Nos campos de futebol.*<sup>16</sup>

But if they achieve nothing else, these verses show that the *fado* is still alive. Despite their monotony and morbidity, the artless sophistication of the words and the technical poverty of the music, it is ridiculous to dismiss these songs, with Pimentel, as "deliquescent and immoral melodies . . . to be understood and felt only by those who vegetate in the mire of crapulence." They have an attraction, difficult to analyse or explain, which may perhaps be accounted for, in part, by their peculiar blend of sincerity and sophistication, of freshness and conventionality; and they have a real intrinsic value as the expression of a racial mood and of a social environment.

<sup>16</sup>He was a star, he was a sun,  
On the football field. . . .

## VIEWS AND REVIEWS

THE eclipse was total but brief. The voices that rose at the moment of darkness, without swelling to a bitter wail of distress, formed a goodly chorus, commanding respectful attention, and rang sweetly in our ears. Their clamor blew a thawing breath into the counting-house. Icy resistance melted. What touched us most, perhaps, were the protests sent from abroad, from England and the Continent. Our distant friends were among those most insistent that the permanent extinction of our little tail-light would be regarded with disfavor. Therefore we are happy, indeed, to restore it to its mild effulgence, even though we must trim our head-lights in order to save oil. But since this form of economy and adjustment was suggested by a number of correspondents, we trust that it will meet with the approval of the majority. To all those of our readers who expressed their friendly solicitude for the destinies of the *Quarterly*, our warmest thanks.

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Léon Vallas has given us the first extensive and authoritative biography of Debussy. This is but natural. His previous books on Debussy, his lectures at the Sorbonne on the composer's life and works, were the preparatory steps that led inevitably to the shaping of this volume. Dr. Vallas—who for the last two or three years has captured American audiences, especially female ones, the length and breadth of our land with the charm and erudition of his *conférences* on French history and art—is as accomplished a writer as he is a fascinating lecturer. His prose and speech alike betray the musical ear. And his musical soul is drawn of necessity to the magician who conjured up, in tones, fragrant “gardens in the rain,” shimmering “reflections in the water,” opalescent “moonlight,” sultry afternoons on which young fauns dream of nymphs and naiads—a whole world of enchanted sounds.

To matters human, as well as musical, M. Vallas applies his sensibility. His insight into Debussy's personality is penetrating, his knowledge of circumstances first-hand. The more creditable is his avowed restraint in “wilfully leaving aside all useless indiscretions.” He has delved into Debussy's family life, his private affairs and correspondence only to an extent indispensable for the understanding of the musician's development. But this does not



prevent him from vaguely hinting, now and then, at perturbing and discordant incidents in the composer's career and flaws in his character, which remain partly unexplained for the present. Anomalous as it may seem, we must assume that, for instance, the epithet "brutal"—which recurs in several places—was justly deserved by one of the most tender, subtle, refined, and sensitive artists that ever lived. Here a little more boldness in the author, a little less regard for certain *légitimes susceptibilités* would have served to elucidate a cloudy and difficult problem. To be sure, the subject is of a too recent past. As always, survivors are still interposed between truth and fiction. To the latter they are apt to give the color that best suits themselves. Whitewash is their favorite pigment. But the years—and scratching pens—make it peel. We may expect that, in time to come, less delicate investigators will offer us "revelations" which may alter the picture we have formed of Debussy, the man, but they will hardly change our estimate of the musician, who ventured forth into unexplored realms of his art and discovered new regions of ravishing and unsuspected beauty, for which his name will ever be the only recognized and proper designation.

M. Vallas has fittingly given to his book the title "Claude Debussy et son temps."<sup>1</sup> The two are inseparable. They influenced each other reciprocally. Before the aging face of music took on the traits of novel loveliness which Debussy, rejuvenator, moulded for it, the lineaments of his own ideas and ideals had been transformed by a rejuvenated art and literature. The painters of "impressionism" and the poets of "symbolism" were the musician's real masters. They also were among the first to hail and approve the composer's "revolutionary" creations. The "movement" embraced more than the twelve tones of the scale. But once they were ranged in a new order, the altered semblance became the visage of a generation. This is clearly brought out by M. Vallas. He combines with the biographer's *flair* for pertinent details, the historian's broader view of an epoch.

In addition, the author has the qualities of a discerning, and occasionally militant, critic. The injection of an argumentative note, here and there, lends zest to the narrative. Debussy stands in need of being defended from false friends. And M. Vallas does not care whom his rapier touches in the good cause. That a few errors and inadvertencies crept into the text and remained there undiscovered until in print, calls for sympathy more than reproach.

<sup>1</sup>Librairie Félix Alcan, Paris, 1932.

One of the most valuable sections of the book is the carefully prepared catalogue of Debussy's compositions, covering 79 pages. According to this list, the greater part of Debussy's original manuscripts are now in the library of the Paris *Conservatoire* (a gift from the publisher Jacques Durand to the French nation). Notable exceptions are the orchestral sketches of the three "Nocturnes" (with three endings of "Nuages"!) in the Library of Congress, the sketches of "La Mer" in the Sibley Library at the Eastman School in Rochester, and the holograph piano score of "Pelléas et Mélisande" in the library of the New England Conservatory in Boston. A translation of M. Vallas's excellent book into English is promised for the near future.

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For nearly eighteen hundred years after the fatal day of Golgotha, there existed no more than four "lives" of our Lord. Half a century after the passing of Richard Wagner at the Palazzo Vendramin in Venice, the books dealing with his life and works number several times eighteen hundred. And the end is not in sight. Nor is all the material, required for a complete and definitive version, supposed to be available. This does not deter the scribes; especially not in a "commemorative" year.

Among the latest offerings in the field of Wagner biography, Mr. Ernest Newman's<sup>2</sup> is unquestionably the most important. This work too, as was the Debussy biography of M. Vallas, is the logical outcome of a series of preparatory studies by the same author, among which his "Wagner as Man and Artist" (1914 and 1924) was the most ambitious. In the preface to the first edition of that book Mr. Newman had pleaded that "the subject of Wagner is inexhaustible." So in truth it seems. And Mr. Newman has sifted as much material as any man so far could lay his hands on, and has sifted it in the capacities of critic, detective, psychoanalyst, and criminologist. Admitting that the subject itself remains as irresistible as it is inexhaustible, the results of Mr. Newman's labors are thoroughly engrossing.

Mr. Newman's style has not greatly changed in the course of the years. It is as crisp and pungent as ever. Having gone over the same ground again and again, he surveys it with a sharp and commanding eye. Not so sharp, forsooth, as always to be absolutely unerring. But it must be granted that to see clear among

<sup>2</sup>"The Life of Richard Wagner." Vol. I. 1813-1848. New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1933.

the maze of deliberately blurred accounts and often contradictory Wagner tales, is no easy task. Mr. Newman at times is given to seeing just what he wants to see and to arranging his "facts" accordingly. That, perhaps, is not Clio at her best. Mr. Newman's form of historical research has already "established" a syphilitical Beethoven, and it now as definitely establishes an illegitimate Wagner. When Mr. Newman gets through with his *recherche de la paternité* (to which the Code Napoléon so sternly and wisely objected), we would swear "it is now certain that Wagner was the son of Geyer." Whereupon we hear Mr. Newman draw a deep breath of unfeigned satisfaction and say: "That's that!" There is at least a fine consistency in thinking of Wagner, the adulterer, as the fruit of adultery. Though we should prefer to believe that it was not Geyer, the mediocre little actor, who begot the boy Richard, but that the "Geyer"—"Vulture" is the meaning of the German—was but another fabled bird in whose guise Jupiter himself, as of old, delighted to continue the Olympian line in the womb of mortal frailty.

Volume One of Mr. Newman's work covers only the first and less eventful half of Wagner's life. A final opinion on the author's achievement should be reserved until the whole work stands completed. No one, having read this first volume, will be able to suppress an impatient desire to read the concluding chapters in the amazing life of this indomitable man and incomparable master.

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We must content ourselves with briefer mention of some other contributions to the Wagner shelf, marking the Wagner year. Guy de Pourtalès had already given us "biographical romances" of Chopin, Liszt, and Louis of Bavaria. His book on Wagner<sup>3</sup> is built on similar lines. The French original contains a short preliminary explanation (not taken over into the English version) in which the author says: "Not being a musicologist, I have not felt called upon to discuss, or analyse, or, above all things, pass judgment upon the musical work of Wagner. As in my previous biographical essays, I have wanted only to paint the portrait of a man and retrace the destinies of a heart, the flurries of which have agitated a whole century." Warm praise should be bestowed upon the excellent English translation made by Lewis May.

<sup>3</sup>"Wagner, histoire d'un artiste"; Paris, Librairie Gallimard, 1932, "Richard Wagner, the Story of an Artist." Translated by Lewis May, New York, Harper & Bros., 1932.

Would that the same translator could have done some other recent Wagner books which have come to us out of the German or the French. The point of greatest interest for Wagner scholars and biographers lies in a letter of Hans von Bülow to Cosima's half-sister, the Countess of Charnacé, dated Sept. 15, 1869. This most revealing and hitherto unpublished letter was communicated to the author by Bülow's and Cosima's daughter, Blandine Countess Gravina (a fact which the English edition does not mention). It is perhaps the first authentic document that permits us to guess how much insight into the Richard-Cosima relations Bülow had prior to the ultimate "desertion" by Cosima in the autumn of 1868, and to judge him more fairly in his attitude toward his wife and "the man who is as sublime in his works as he is incomparably abject in his conduct."

While we are told the not surprising fact that "For more than three years I have taken upon myself a life of incessant torture," we also find the significant statement that, apparently as late as November 1868, Cosima was still trying to keep from her husband the whole bitter truth, since he writes:

In November [1868], when I put an almost indelicate question to her as to the reasons for her sudden departure (I had vainly beseeched her to wait for the arrival of Liszt, in January), Cosima saw fit to answer me by perjuring herself. That she had done so I learned a few months ago *through the newspapers* [Bülow's italics!] which announced openly the good fortunes of the maestro, whom his mistress (the full name in cold type)<sup>4</sup> had at last presented with a son, baptized in the name of Siegfried, happy omen for the approaching completion of his opera! Thus the edifice (of my cuckoldom) was crowned in the most resplendent fashion.

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To the insatiable we further recommend "Richard Wagner, l'homme, le poète, le novateur" by L.-F. Choisy, Professor at the University of Geneva (Paris, Fischbacher, 1933), and "The Unconquerable Tristan, the story of Richard Wagner" by Benjamin Morris Steigman (New York, The Macmillan Company, 1933). The first book, in a small frame, tries to give a good deal, but does not impress us as giving anything really new, although as a critical study it stands above the book by Pourtalès. Mr. Steigman's

<sup>4</sup>This parenthesis, in the original, says "le nom en toutes lettres"—Bülow wrote in French—which Mr. May translates "So they openly referred to her." This strikes us as garbling the sense. The shocking part was not that Wagner had a mistress, but that the name of the lady was boldly set out in type, the ribald title ignominiously coupled with that of Baroness von Bülow.

"story" is divided into three parts which are entitled "Minna," "Mathilde," "Cosima." This ground plan reminds us uncomfortably of Julius Kapp and his "Dreigestirn." But whereas Mr. Kapp does not always clearly indicate his sources, Mr. Steigman adopted the laudable procedure of basing his narrative chiefly upon an extensive correspondence and appended to his book a careful and reassuring documentation. The book "reads well"; it has dramatic life and, occasionally, melodramatic touches. They are conditioned by the "story" itself, in which dramatic clashes and melodramatic situations—bordering often on the tragicomic and burlesque—alternate in bewildering contrast. The "Leitmotiv" that binds the whole together, is Wagner's singleness of passion for the Eternal Feminine and his Eternal Renewal in the act of creation. No technical or critical excursions halt the straight progress of Mr. Steigman's chronicle. He sets it all down with the vividness and conviction of an eye-witness—a fellow-actor almost more than a spectator. And Wagner's life certainly offers a better and more fantastic show than the best and most romantic of his stage yarns.

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In the series "Die Grossen Meister der Musik" (edited by Dr. Ernst Bücken) has appeared a very attractive volume on "Giuseppe Verdi" by Dr. Herbert Gerigk (Potsdam, Athenaion, 1932). The author lays a good deal of merited stress upon Verdi's earlier works and defends him successfully against the often repeated accusation of "triviality" and "banality." It is generally the performance which is responsible for such erroneous impression. The book is handsomely and profusely illustrated with pictures and musical examples. The latter serve admirably to impress one, even at a cursory reading, with the wealth and variety of Verdi's inspiration, and with the unfailing certainty of his theatrical instinct.

Mr. George Dyson has written a book which is very much after our own heart. It is entitled "The Progress of Music"<sup>5</sup> and its 230-odd pages are grouped into five sections headed "The Church," "Castle and Chamber," "The Stage," "The Concert-Hall," and "Men and Machines." It is nothing less than a brief history of music, compact, absorbing, full of neat turns, epigrammatic, axiomatic, sometimes debatable, but always alive. Hardly

<sup>5</sup>London, University Press, 1932.—U. S. A. Agents, Carl Fischer, Inc.

any biographical stuff clutters up these pages. The biographical dictionary will furnish that. It is a musician's survey of music's growth, based, of course, on the research of others, but presented in the author's very personal form and refreshing frankness. Music to Mr. Dyson is not an isolated manifestation but a part of our social fabric and national character. Here is a sample-observation:

Composers are not rare phenomena, nor is music an esoteric art. It lives by virtue of the people who practise it, and what they ask for will be supplied. Music too remotely beyond them, or too blatantly beneath their taste, will quickly die. It was the domestic standard of German music which could select and accept the songs of men like Brahms and Wolf. France and Italy were mainly busy with more public and spectacular forms. England had plenty of homely effort, but a very low standard of value. The songs of Parry and Stanford were not unworthy to stand beside those of Germany, but they had to fight a flood of sentimental mediocrity of well-nigh universal popularity. We paid thus for our ignorance. Our most educated classes had the crudest musical ideas. Our publicists, our merchants, our scientists, and our men of letters were, with a few exceptions, confessed philistines. A populace which, having just learnt to read, was matched by an aristocracy which flaunted its artistic poverty of ideas and practised a rank emotionalism. This treacle tide has ebbed, but it takes time to build informed opinion, and the task is all the harder when a nation's social leaders have neither direct experience nor acquired knowledge of an art.

Homely truth which applies to places other than England. We could go on quoting many passages from this stimulating book. No matter where you open it, you fall upon some thought-provoking passage. It should find grateful readers.

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We wish that we could devote adequate space to a detailed review of Professor George Pullen Jackson's "White Spirituals in the Southern Uplands" (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1933). It is the first serious attempt at an historical and critical presentation of some of our American "religious folk-songs," the ways of those who sing them, and the unique fashion in which some of them have been recorded in print. The author takes the reader from the beginnings of American group-singing in New England to the singing schools in the West and South, with their curious "shape-notes" devised as "helps to read" music. The figure of Benjamin Franklin White, author of "The Sacred Harp," looms large in this strange motley of cranks and geniuses. White was born in 1800. The "Sacred Harp Singing Conventions" are

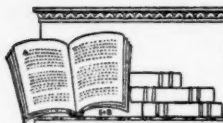


held to this day in the South, land of the "fasola singers" and "dorayme folk," sturdy races of devotional music-lovers who remain isolated and unknown to the rest of the country.

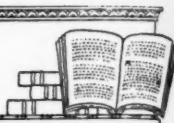
If the surest way to kill a minority human undertaking is for the powerful majority to ignore it, the southern country singers' institution is doomed. For in the big outside world, the great masses of people with non-specialized cultural interests as well as its scholarly people—musicians, historians, sociologists, anthropologists, hymnologists—are alike in their ignorance (I do not use the word in its aspersive sense) of this long-lived, widespread, and organically developed activity.

All the more timely is Prof. Jackson's book. It contains a remarkable amount of original research and will retain a permanent value by virtue of the great wealth of information here for the first time brought together. If some of the author's opinions are likely to be challenged, that does not detract from the general merit he has earned in ploughing, thoroughly and skilfully, a rich and untilled field. As a contribution to the musical history and folk-art of America, Mr. Jackson's study takes high rank. The chapter on "White Man's and Negro's spiritual songs" and the one on the "White Man's and Negro's spiritual texts compared" should go far to settle certain matters which have too long remained controversial. Prof. Jackson presents his evidence so convincingly that at least one musical fable should for all time be exploded. There remains glory enough for everyone.

C. E.



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